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Many Happy Returns
To Hazel
From Ruth Newby

Oct 8, 1910.

Miss Ayr of Virginia & Other Stories

Miss Ayr of Virginia & Other Stories

BY

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"THE PRINCESS SONIA"

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Miss Ayr of Virginia

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When Miss Ayr of Virginia came down to take her place on the coach for the races, in company with her cousins, the Miss Ayrs of New York, there was a discrepancy between the former and the latter which could scarcely have failed to attract attention. It could not be denied that the advantage was on the side of the last-named ladies, though Miss Ayr of Virginia was exquisite, and they were plain.

Compared with such costumes as they wore, however, such *chic*, such height, such distinguished bearing, what was mere beauty? The little country girl, with her village-made costume, just saved from absolute dowdiness by a few touches from her cousins' maid (which she had inwardly

resented), was certainly a fish out of water in that jaunty party; and in her wretched little soul she felt it.

Moreover, her dress was not only countrified, it was unbecoming. Its style of construction quite disguised her slight and charming figure, and her hat was as complete a handicap for a beautiful face as could well have been invented.

She did not realize this, not having as yet entirely lost her buoyant belief in herself, which was one result of her being an only child and the spoiled darling of her father, besides being the recognized belle of her county. What she did realize, however, was that these fashionable cousins of hers found her a nuisance, and that the invitation which she had received from their father would never have come from themselves.

The Miss Ayrs of New York were partly right in what they said of their cousin, namely, that she had been badly brought up. This fact might possibly

have been overlooked on the score of her having lost her mother in childhood, but for the other fact, that the Miss Ayrs of New York were in the same case, and yet felt proudly conscious that they could challenge the world as to their unimpeachable good form. There was one important difference between the two families, however. The Ayrs of New York were rich, while the Ayrs of Virginia were poor. The war, which had caused the impoverishment of the latter branch of the family was not yet so far back in the past but that days of opulence and ease could yet be remembered, even by this sole representative in the present generation, Miss Carter Ayr, who, now for the first time emerged from the safety and seclusion of her beloved South, was come to taste the delights of a season in New York.

The two brothers, who were the respective heads of the families, had both been left widowers, and neither of them

had re-married; but John Ayr of New York had been able to give his daughters the very best that money could do for them, in the way of governesses and chaperonage and foreign travel, while Henry Ayr of Virginia had had to content himself with the ministrations of a gentle, old-maid cousin, who had been governess and chaperon in one, and had let Carter grow up much as she chose — a fact which had not in the least interfered with her father's complete satisfaction with her.

There were three Miss Ayrs of New York, and they were all tall, and imposing, and perfectly dressed. They were particularly showy for an occasion such as the present, which was, perhaps, one reason why Jim Stafford, the young bachelor millionaire to whom all society did reverence, had invited all three of them to go out on his coach to-day. Jim was a very good-natured fellow, however, and often did things with no other prompting than that

quality, and so, when Mr. Ayr, hearing the matter discussed over night, and no provision made for Carter, had insisted that one of the girls should yield her place to her cousin, Jim had good-naturedly said there was room for all, and Mr. Ayr had decreed that Carter should go. He generally interfered very little, but his daughters knew that when he spoke he meant to be obeyed.

So, in this way, it happened that little Carter Ayr found herself in the midst of that fluttering, chattering, bantering party, whose jargon was wholly unfamiliar, and whose manner toward herself seemed to surround her with an atmosphere of chill and constraint.

As the female element was so largely supplied by the ladies Ayr, most of the strangers whom Carter saw about her were men. She had never seen such men as these before, except in a tailor's picture-plate, and she felt rather a contempt for them, as country-bred people are apt to

feel toward those who dress as they have neither the means nor the knowledge to dress. Carter, with her provincial prejudice against fastidiousness in dress, particularly on the part of men, now got some sense of inward support by adopting a supercilious criticism of the exquisitely cared for details of the costumes of these men. She had a standard in her little Southern heart by which she liked to believe that she measured these fashionable gentlemen into puniness.

In spite of all her loyalty to a very different type, she could not help feeling lonely and depressed, as she was assisted to mount to her high seat, while the grooms could hardly keep in check the impatience of the four superbly harnessed horses. Carter, who knew the points of a horse, thought the harness rather outdid the horses themselves, but what did her opinion amount to in this company, where she was so evidently a supernumerary and an incubus?

It was an uncommonly pretty foot that she put on the ladder to mount, but it had on a very bad shoe. Even the big and clumsy feet of her cousins contrasted favorably with it, for the reason that their shoes were of shiny patent leather, with sharply-pointed toes, which made her little blunt ones look somehow stunted and shabby. But then, again, she had reason to reflect that no one was noticing her!

Who has not felt a certain sense of pity on festal occasions, for the friend who is brought? That person seems, somehow, surrounded with a sort of blight among the others who have come by a process of natural selection.

But if any heart, under those fashionable habiliments, felt a tender sentiment for Carter, no one showed it. Jim Stafford, himself, was wholly occupied with handling the reins, as they drove through the crowded streets. The Misses Gladys, Ethel, and Rosamond Ayr were making themselves as painstakingly agreeable to

the men beside them as if it had been their business to divert attention from all the others present, and the married woman, who was acting as chaperon to the party, was the most cold and unapproachable of the lot—or so Carter had concluded, when one of her cousins had given her a casual introduction to Mrs. Emory, as "Miss Ayr of Virginia."

Somehow, the intonation with which it had been said had given an indefinable offense to Carter, and when other members of the party took it up and said:

"Help Miss Ayr of Virginia to her place," or "Miss Ayr of Virginia comes next," or "Do n't crowd Miss Ayr of Virginia," though it was all said in an amiable way, Carter's sense of resentment deepened. There seemed to be a certain disrespect to her beloved State implied, and that was more than she could calmly bear.

It was a new and exciting experience to her to be whirled through the thronged

city streets, and gazed at by admiring crowds, upon whom she looked down from such a great height that it almost made her dizzy. If she had been in a congenial atmosphere, it would have been delightful, for she was inherently pleasure-loving, and her blood was young and ardent; but, as things were, everything seemed to add to her sense of loneliness and depression.

The sky had been over-cast when they started out, but now, suddenly, the sun appeared, and with it came a little gleam across the shadows on Carter's face. She had felt bitterly the fact that she was ill-dressed (though, at home, these clothes had seemed to her good enough for any company in the world!) but with the appearance of the sunshine she had remembered the one really incontrovertibly handsome and imposing thing which she possessed—an elegant parasol, which she had bought the day before at a very fashionable place, and for a price which a week ago would have frightened her. Her

father had paid over to her a little legacy from an aunt, and she had intended to invest this in jewels or some permanent thing, but she had heard her cousin Gladys admire that parasol, and, needing one, she had boldly purchased it.

So, here, at least, she could be confident, and it was with an air of satisfaction that she now unfurled her gorgeous sun-shade, and let the full glory of its laces and ribbons float to the breeze.

The motion that it made attracted general attention to her, and simultaneously with this she heard Gladys say, in a voice of excited protest:

"For heaven's sake, tell Carter to put down that parasol!"

The word was then passed to Ethel, who, in the same excited tone, passed it to the man seated next to Carter.

"Miss Ayr of Virginia is requested to lower her parasol," he said, with more amiability in his manners than her two cousins had used.

Carter, who had heard the behest, when it had originated with her eldest cousin, did not at once succumb, but said, from under the flaunting glory of the proscribed article:

"Why?"

"Of course, coming from Virginia she did n't know," she heard her cousin saying in a tone of contemptuous extenuation, which she hotly resented.

No one had answered her question, however, and so turning to the woman who sat nearest to her—it happened to be Mrs. Emory—she said:

"Why should n't I raise my parasol, if the sun is out?"

"It is n't done," was the answer, given curtly and coldly, and Mrs. Emory returned at once to her talk with her neighbor.

Carter, of course, furled her offending sun-shade, feeling snubbed and sore. It would have been childish and rude to persist, but she was not only hurt, but puz-

zled. Being from the rural regions she had not as her cousin suggested, any knowledge of the fact that it was not considered smart to raise a parasol on a coach. This sacred tenet was so strictly adhered to, however, that although it was a warm and dusty autumn day, the ladies endured the heat unmurmuringly, staring with haughty superiority at the coaches on which the people were pleasantly shaded by their parasols.

By the time the entrance to the race-course was reached, Carter was completely miserable. She despised the trivial conventions to which she saw such importance attached, and she had a sense of suppressed rage at being forced into an inferior position by people to whom she felt herself superior.

She was no more conceited than an only child, and an acknowledged belle and beauty might be excused for being, and she did know, in her heart, that she would have been incapable of treating the mean-

est slave on her father's estate as unkindly as she felt that these people were treating her.

No one noticed her as they went bowling along in the crowded procession of vehicles, until, near the entrance, they came to a sudden halt, the carriage in front of them having halted also.

The footmen sprang down and went to the leaders' heads, while necks were craned and eager questions put as to the cause of the blockade.

It was apparent enough. One of a pair of oxen, engaged in some heavy draught in connection with the preparing of the track and grounds, had fallen down, or else thrown itself down in a fit of sullenness and could not be got to move. The animal was strong and fat, and looked more obstinate than ill, but it was impossible not to feel pity for a creature so beaten and belabored and kicked, as it was, by the men about it. The thing had apparently been going on for some time,

and the men looked as if their efforts were well-nigh exhausted.

Various suggestions were made and tried in vain. Many vehicles had emptied their passengers, and a crowd had gathered, while the ox, stubborn and defiant, still refused to budge.

The party on the coach, from their high position, could see all that was happening, and cries of distress soon began to rise from them.

"What are we to do?" "The creature has n't a notion of moving!" "We shall be kept here all day!" were some of the protesting remarks, through which a very sweetly modulated voice, with an accent so unlike theirs as to sound almost foreign, was heard to say:

"I could make it get up, in half a minute."

"Hear! Hear!" cried Jim Stafford, turning toward the speaker, who was flushed, but perfectly composed. "Virginia to the rescue! Miss Ayr of Virginia

undertakes to raise the stalled ox! Ten to one she does it!"

The bet was eagerly taken by another man, and Carter found herself the center of interest.

"Enter the field, Miss Ayr of Virginia," said Jim Stafford. "Only explain your method of procedure, and I'm your backer. What do you propose to do?" And with the arrant childishness of the average pleasure-seeker all the men present became absorbed in this incident, which offered a new and unexpected diversion.

All the women, meantime, were looking at the young Southern girl with cold disapprobation.

"Now, Miss Ayr of Virginia," said Jim Stafford, "give your orders. How do you propose to do it?"

"Could we possibly get some mud from anywhere?" asked Carter.

"Mud? not likely, in this dust!" said one man, but Stafford cut him short.

"Mud? Of course. Nothing simp-

ler!" he said. "Here, Trollope, get a bottle of Apollinaris out of the lunch-basket and break it in the road;" and as the groom flew to comply with his order he turned to Carter.

"We'll have the mud in a jiffy," he said. "Now, what's to be done with it?"

"Stop the ox's nostrils with it," Carter decreed next.

The young dudes on the coach gave a little "Hooray!" and in a moment they were down in the road, stirring the fizzing water into the yellow dust with their canes, with all the glee of children at a new game.

The mixture was soon turned into a stiff mud, and the immaculate Trollope was ordered to fill his hands with it and follow his master.

Every eye was fixed on Jim Stafford, as he approached the man who had the ox in charge and ask permission to try his experiment. Carter, left on the coach with the women, who she felt, instinct-

ively, were not the friendly element of the party, watched with a confidence not unmixed with anxiety. How could she tell that these Yankee oxen would respond to Virginia treatment? And if they did not, where would she hide her humiliated head? She realized that, like many another act of daring, its only justification would be in its success.

"Stop up both nostrils at once, and hold it in," she called to Trollope, in her pretty, low voice.

The crowd made way for the groom and his master to approach, and the performance was quickly accomplished.

The next instant, there was a heaving and panting on the part of the ox, and, with a frantic motion of consternation, it had scrambled to its feet, and stood there snorting out the mud and shaking its great head from side to side.

The man in charge of it caught hold of its harness, and without the least difficulty, led it away.

The road was open.

"Three times three for Miss Ayr of Virginia!" cried Jim Stafford, and his companions, imitating him, waved their hats around their heads and echoed his words.

It was not loud enough to be positively rowdy, but it was too loud, it seemed, to suit Mrs. Emory's sense of decorum, for she was heard to say rather severely:

"Really, Jim, if you ask me to chaperon your parties, I must insist upon decent behavior. This is unbearable!" and she turned upon poor little Carter a glance that was meant to be perfectly annihilating.

"Get out, Mamie! You're making a point about nothing," her cousin answered, in an amiable, off-hand fashion. "If you'd been the heroine of that incident, you'd think you deserved cheers and you'd have had them. I'm not going to see Miss Ayr of Virginia deprived of the honor and glory which are her due."

His cousin said nothing, but her face

continued to look both offended and aggrieved, and she turned away to speak with some of the women of the party, who seemed promptly sympathetic.

Carter heard her name pronounced several times among them in a tone which she did not like, and it was Gladys whom she distinctly heard saying:

"This is what comes of giving a girl a man's name and letting her run wild, as they do in the South."

Carter felt indignant at the aspersion cast on her beloved South, but the assiduities which she was at that moment receiving from all the men in the party helped her to bear it.

It was not altogether her victoriousness in her recent undertaking that had made them rally round her so. It had at last penetrated their rather slow minds that the women were exercising a sort of tacit ostracism against this young stranger, and every one of them was ready with his protest.

Carter, moreover, had acquired a brilliant color, by reason of her late experience, and, now that their eyes had been drawn to her directly, they saw how uncommonly pretty she was, and regarded her unfashionable garments with a commiseration that had something akin to chivalry in it. She felt this, and, under the influence of sympathy, her beauty blossomed out like a flower. She became suddenly gay and at her ease. The men were so absolutely friendly that the women no longer frightened her.

When Jim Stafford had brought his four bays triumphantly into place and they had taken their position by the race-course, the grooms took the horses away, and the host of the party being liberated from his exacting duties as whip, was free to seek his own will and pleasure.

It was not long before the nature and direction of that became manifest, for he deliberately proposed a shuffling of seats

and partners, by which he managed to seat himself next to Carter.

"I want to understand the philosophy of that splendid achievement of yours," he said. "Why did the mud make the ox jump up so quickly?"

"Because the mud stopped its nostrils and it could not breathe."

"But can't oxen breathe through their mouths?"

"They either can't, or they think they can't, for they never make any effort to do it. It was having its breathing suddenly checked that so startled and terrified the creature that it instinctively sprang to its feet, and its whole mood was changed."

"And where — if one may ask — did you become the possessor of such a unique and valuable piece of information?"

(By Jove, she *was* pretty, he reflected, and particularly so at that moment, when, for some reason, a flood of lovely rose-color suffused her face.)

"A neighbor of ours told me about it,"

she said. "I am glad I happened to think of it."

"I should think so, indeed! But for that timely thought of yours, we should probably have spent the day there, awaiting that brute's pleasure!"

He knew that this was not so, but he suddenly found himself possessed of a consuming desire to do homage to this girl.

And to tell the truth, she looked not unused to homage. Indeed, she was far more natural and at her ease, now that she was being made much of and paid court to, than she had been, when neglected and left alone. There could be no doubt as to which of these conditions was her accustomed element.

When the racing began, the general interest centered on the track, of course, and as the different horses were led out, Carter showed and expressed such a knowingness on the subject that all the men listened with visible interest to what she had to say. The remarks of the other women

sounded the merest *banalités* in comparison, for this little country maiden knew a horse as she knew a friend.

She was wildly excited over the first race, and had the good fortune to pick out the winner. As a consequence, the men all insisted on her betting on the second one, putting up gloves and candy recklessly. To their surprise, their overtures were promptly snubbed, the little Virginian looking so hurt at such a proposition that her big eyes showed a suspicion of tears. The other ladies of the party, however, took up the bets with avidity, though their opportunities were decidedly more limited.

At last the great race of the day was called. A grey horse named Quicksilver was the hot favorite in it, and was to be ridden by a colored jockey. This last fact caught Carter's attention, and sent her thoughts flying wistfully Southward, and she was further interested because he wore the Confederate colors — white and red.

She could not see his face, but it was easy to distinguish the silver-grey horse, and, to her delight, it came in first, though pushed hard by another horse named Hautboy.

The second heat was even more exciting, for now Quicksilver came tearing along the home stretch, neck and neck with Hautboy.

The two ran together superbly, their jockeys poised like birds upon their backs, but just before the judges' stand was reached, there was a wild plunging and collision, and Hautboy came in ahead.

And then began a scene of frantic excitement. The little mulatto who had ridden Quicksilver was in a state of fury, bordering upon insanity. He vowed that Hautboy's jockey had used some trickery, and appealed to the judges, who refused to sustain him. At this he went simply beside himself, and tossing away his whip, declared he would not ride the other heat. Threats, expostulations, bribes, oaths, abusive epithets, coaxing cajoleries were

used in vain. He was simply maddened with fury, and stubbornly adhered to his refusal.

Quicksilver, meanwhile, was being walked about, switching his tail viciously and glaring wickedly to right and left. He was an evil-tempered brute, and this young darkey was the only rider who seemed equal to him. Immense sums had been put up on the race and desperate measures were resorted to to bring the obstreperous jockey to his reason.

But it was all in vain. He reiterated his refusal with excited fury. He said a million dollars would n't make him ride the other heat, and that he 'd die first.

All this time Carter had been watching the scene with eagerness, their coach being very near to the judges' stand, and now, as the little darkey, bearing her beloved Southern colors, turned his defiant face upward toward the judges' stand, and she saw it clearly for the first time, a suspicion, which had been slowly dawning on her,

was turned into reality—a reality that thrilled her through with excitement.

"He must do it! He shall!" she said, in a low tone to Jim Stafford. "Take me down there, and I'll make him!"

Stafford looked at her aghast. He was excited enough himself, for the time was flying, and, with a little more delay, the race would be declared off.

"By Jove!" he said, in one second's hesitation, and then, remembering the ox, he added, "Come on, then, quickly," and in another instant she was nimbly descending the ladder and he was making a way for her to get to the railing.

The party on the coach stared protestingly, and Gladys made an effort to recall her, but little heed paid Carter, as she found herself close up to the railing, toward which the colored jockey was even now advancing, in his defiant resolution to leave the field.

A dozen men were following him, with urgent beseechings and threats, to which

he turned an absolutely deaf ear, until suddenly, across this clamor a soft, clear voice said, with a ring of command:

"You, Little Tom!"

The darkey turned, as if shot, and looked the speaker full in the face.

"Get up on that horse this instant!" said the same clear voice, imperiously. "Bring him here," it added, to the man who was holding Quicksilver's bridle, and as the restive animal was brought near, it suddenly became apparent that the human creature had been subdued.

The bewildered jockey stared full at the young lady before him, and when she said:

"Get up—quick, I say! You have n't a second to lose."

The resolute command was immediately obeyed, and the red-and-white-shirted jockey was on the horse and in his place, five seconds only before the order to start was given.

Only those in the immediate neighbor-

hood had seen and heard what passed, and even they were so preoccupied by the paramount excitement of the moment, that, in their eagerness to follow the horses now flying away down the track, they forgot to think about the girl who had saved the day by some occult authority which she possessed, and so she managed to slip through the crowd almost unobserved, and to regain her seat upon the coach, followed by Stafford in a state of ecstacy over her success.

Meantime, the horses, like a pack of hounds, were bunched together on the other side of the course, but now the grey could be seen to be steadily gaining, and soon the red and white colors could be distinguished. Quicksilver was ahead, and every instant was an advance for him. As his slight young rider, leaning forward with his mount, rose in his stirrups, and rested in delicate poise, the breeze whipping into fluttering folds the striped silk of his shirt, and seeming to blow backward, in its strong

current even Quicksilver's lowered ears, the crowd sent up a wild yell of enthusiasm, in which one alien-sounding voice was heard exclaiming:

"Good for you, Little Tom!"

The voice was so low, however, that no one heard it very plainly except Stafford, and now, as the race ended, with Quicksilver first, and no second, he turned delightedly to his companion, saying:

"Good for you, Miss Ayr of Virginia! It was you who saved the day, and now will you be good enough to tell me how you did it? If ever I saw a creature determined to go his own way and defy consequences, it was that angry negro, until you spoke to him, when he came down like a lamb. How you managed it — (and without even the aid of mud!) — is what I want you to explain."

"O, there is nothing wonderful in it when you come to find out," said Carter. "It 's our Little Tom, who ran off from home some time ago and his mammy has been

grieving for him ever since. Of course when I spoke to him, he would not dare to disobey me."

"So it appeared," said Stafford, "though he did not scruple to disobey and defy a dozen determined men! I must say I don't understand it. And since he is a grown man, why do you call him 'Little Tom,' may I ask?"

"To distinguish him from the other Toms on the place," said Carter. "There were so many of them — Little Tom, and Tom, and Uncle Tom, and Old Uncle Tom, and Old *Old* Uncle Tom."

This explanation, which Carter made so simply, proved immensely amusing to the men of the party, who laughed and enjoyed it sufficiently to hide, in part, the lack of enthusiasm which the ladies had shown.

Stafford insisted on going and looking Little Tom up, and bringing him to drink a glass of champagne in honor of his triumph. He came, sheepishly enough,

when he heard who had sent for him, though he had borne himself with a good deal of swagger in the crowd where Stafford found him.

"Howdy, Miss Kyarter," he said, taking off his cap, and dangling it nervously in his hands, as he stood on the ground looking up at her. "I sut 'ny is glad tuh see yuh. Them white folks kinder confused me 'bout dat race, en mammy ain' whup all the temper out'er me yit! I sut'ny is glad you bin come 'long, en mek me ride. I leet more loss dat money! En I gwine let yuh tek half of it home wid yuh, fuh a presen' tuh mammy."

"That 's right, Little Tom," said Carter. "It 'll please mammy mightily. I 'm going to tell her about the race and what a fine horse you rode."

"Yes 'm, he 's right smart fine, Quicksilver is, but I don' think he ekills we all's Whitefoot. I ain' see none dese yer horses dat 's up to Whitefoot *yet!* Ef ole Mars 'd lemme bring Whitefoot on

hyar, en ride 'im at a race, he 'd beat 'em all, en dat 's what I tell 'em every time."

Carter, who was intimately acquainted with Little Tom's character and points of view, smiled to herself at this compliment to poor old Whitefoot, whose best days were so far in the past. She knew it was only done to impress strangers with the importance of the people to whom, in spite of his desertion of them for scenes more congenial to his adventurous spirit, he was and would always remain loyal.

After this little episode, Carter's timidity vanished, and, being the centre of attraction on the coach now, she felt far more at her ease, and she talked much and talked well. But, with it all, her voice was so low, her speech so gently modulated, as she told negro anecdotes and imitated their talk, that her cousins found nothing to say afterward, except that she had made herself rather conspicuous, and Carter, who felt that they would gladly

have said more, felt that she could well endure that.

Miss Ayr of Virginia had certainly been very unfortunate in the specimens of New York women whom she had so far encountered, and, being very rash and impulsive, she must be forgiven for making the great mistake of judging all New York women by these cousins of hers and their associates in "the smart set." And as a convert to any faith is always more zealous and infatuated than those who have been born to it, so the Miss Ayrs of New York were the extreme examples of this type.

The little Virginian, who was accustomed to using her wits, had discovered one thing during that day's experience at the races, which disturbed her very much. This was that she was badly dressed. It stung her pride at first to be compelled to own it, but having done so, she set about the task of remedying this defect. She had naturally a genial and affectionate nature, and her first step was to try to

get some help from her cousins. They, however, showed so very little interest in the matter that Carter, who now realized that she was heavily handicapped by her dresses and bonnets, was led to believe that they did not wish to see this disability removed. This thought hurt her, at first, and then inspired her to a course of resolute and independent action.

She knew that her father would be distressed if she came home suddenly and gave her real reasons for such a course; and, besides, she could not travel alone, and the time which her father had set to come for her was still weeks off, so she made up her mind to stay, and to provide herself with such an outfit as would change the face of her staying.

Finding her cousins quite indisposed to give her their aid, she made a note of an address on the belt of one of their dresses, and next morning she went to that address and held a conference with that high authority.

The woman recognized her as a pretty subject, and they put their heads together and got up two charming costumes, one for street, and the other for evening wear. The dressmaker happened not to be very busy, and the dresses were promised in a few days' time. Then Carter, who had taken in a good deal of the prevailing modes from her yesterday's experiences, went boldly, all by herself, and bought a hat, and gloves, and shoes.

Every moment it was borne in on her more plainly what a countrified little being she was, and she felt that if she now got safely housed once more, she would not venture out, until she could spread her wings in her new plumage.

It was, therefore, a real regret to her when she presently encountered Jim Stafford, immaculately dressed and gloved and booted, walking down Fifth Avenue with a bunch of fresh violets in his button-hole and a smile on his good-natured face, which deepened into a look of real pleas-

ure as he recognized her and lifted his tall hat.

She would have been quite content to bow and pass on, but he turned and walked with her.

"What luck!" he said, in his jolly way. "Would you believe that I was that moment thinking of you? The stories of the ox and the jockey are all over town to-day, and everybody is wanting to see you. When will you go out on my coach again?"

"Not until I get some better clothes to wear," said Carter, in her impulsive way. "I never knew, until yesterday, how countrified country people are!"

"And who undertook to enlighten you, I'd like to know?" said her companion, frowning. "Some spiteful woman, of course! There's nothing the matter that I can see, and if I were you I'd pay no attention to their criticisms."

"You would n't? Then you are distinctly *not* me, for I'm mending my

ways with the utmost rapidity. You must n't ask me to appear again in public, until I can look like other people."

"But that 's exactly what I do n't want. It 's just because you look—and are—unlike other people that I like you. It would be a perfect shame for you to be changed into one of the people you are going to imitate."

"Never fear that," said Carter, with a sudden seriousness. "We are utterly different peoples, I think—the North and the South! I have never been in the North before, and I feel I 'm in a foreign land.

"Do n't say that! I can't bear to have you feeling that way. What could one do to make you feel at home here?"

"Nothing—I verily believe! The South is in my veins—but I think, in a way, kindness makes one feel at home everywhere—and you *have* been kind to me!"

By this time they had reached her uncle's house and she held out her hand as

if to say good-bye. Her look was so sweet and winning as he took that little hand, awkwardly gloved as it was, that he felt an inward protest at being dismissed.

"Why may I not come in?" he said.

"There's no one at home," she answered, innocently, "the girls were all going to a tea."

"Decidedly, I shall come in," he said, as he rang the bell. "Why did n't they take you to the tea?"

"O, they said they thought I would n't care for it, and they were right."

When the servant opened the door and ushered them into the drawing-room, he stopped to ask if he should serve tea there.

Carter hesitated a second, but Stafford said promptly:

"Yes, Thompson, you may. I am going to get Miss Ayr to give me a cup."

So in a very few moments Carter found herself seated before the exquisitely appointed tea-tray, pouring out a fragrant cupful, for this pleasant and friendly

man, who was evidently enjoying himself thoroughly.

There was an undeniable sense of pleasure in it. The room was so large and beautiful and luxurious; Thompson deferred to her wishes in such an agreeable manner; the tea was so good; the china and silver so delicate; the man facing her was so *soigné* in all the appointments of his dress—in short, there was about her everywhere the sense of ease and luxury which money alone brings—and Carter had never cared a rap for money! Her wants had been so few and small that they had always been readily supplied; in fact she had never before imagined the mere material comfort which it was possible to miss out of life.

"Do tell me something more about the darkies," said her companion, sipping his tea enjoyingly, when Thompson had gone, "I've been chuckling ever since, over those stories you told us yesterday."

Carter knit her pretty brow to try to

think up something. It was very pleasant to her to try to amuse this amiable man, for she really felt grateful to him, and anxious to please him.

"O, I'll tell you about Uncle Enos, when he got religion," she said, smiling at the remembrance. "It was such a clever thing in him! Enos was our white-washer, and he had been notoriously bad and irreligious, until his conversion. The very next day he came to me and told me of it, and added that, early that morning, while he was white-washing a fence, a serious danger had threatened him in his new life. 'Miss Kyarter,' he said, 'I was wuckin' away en thinkin' 'bout de blessed change whar done bin cum tuh me, en I look up en see one o' them miser'ble, low-life, God-forsaken niggers, whar I had done bin use tuh keep comp'ny with, a-cummin' down de road. I see him begin tuh laugh en sner, ez soon ez he cum nigh me, en I knowed 'twus kus I done jine de army o' de Lord. He stop short on t'other side de

fence, en he low since I bin done got religion, he s'pose I b'lieve everything de Bible say is true? I tell him, 'Yes, bless de Lord!' 'Well,' he say, with one o' his wicked, mischeeveous grins, 'don't de Bible say dat when de Lord done finish all He wuks, He bin look at 'em all, en behol' dey was all good?' 'Yes,' I tell him, 'dem is de ve'y words o' de blessed book.' 'Well,' he say, 'did n' de Lord mek de *Devil?* How was dat?' en he slaps his impident fat sides en busted out a-laughin'! He had jiss turn roun' to go way, when I call him back. 'Hol' on, you blasphemious black-skinned raskill!' I say, 'you think yuh dun kotch me, do yuh? But was n' he a mighty good *Devil?*'"

Stafford laughed, with a feeling of zest that he had not known for a long while. He was evidently immensely amused at the negro characteristics, as Carter unfolded them to him, and the girl, catching sight of a guitar, tucked away in

a corner, ran and brought it, in her natural and impulsive way, and, with her head prettily turned on one side, began to tune it.

"I 'm going to sing you some plantation hymns," she said. "Shall I ? "

As he responded with the most evident enthusiasm, she got her chords attuned and began to sing to an indescribably plaintive tune :

" O, send down de angel to trouble o' de water,
O, send down de angel to trouble o' de water,
O, send down de angel to trouble o' de water,
And to let God's saints come in."

Her voice was exquisitely clear and sweet and she possessed the unusual charm of looking especially attractive when she sang. Altogether, the experience was new to Stafford, and very interesting. To see that pretty creature, in her country-made gown, with the hat thrown aside from her charming head, which it had roughened into picturesque disorder, sing-

ing that wistful, yearning tune about God's saints, with such an absence of any self-consciousness, except that she was giving pleasure, was really a rare delight to the young man of fashion. His whole life was the pursuit of pleasure, and he found it in a very piquant form here.

She sang next a hymn beginning "De Gospel train am coming roun' de bend," and then passed into the tripping measure of "Who'll be de Leader, when de Bride-Groom comes?" a catching little air with which he was enchanted.

Altogether he had not been so well entertained for a long time, and the next morning came a note asking that Miss Ayr of Virginia and one of her cousins would take seats on his coach for an expedition to be got up in special compliment to the first-named Miss Ayr.

It was a surprise to her cousins and, as Carter could see, not a welcome one. Gladys, being spokesman, said that she thought it best to mention the fact that, in

her conspicuous seat by the driver, her costume would be a target for criticism.

"Oh, I don't mind that," said Carter, lightly. "Mr. Stafford didn't ask me for my clothes."

"You would feel awkward, I should think—" began Gladys, but Carter interrupted her:

"Not a bit, I assure you!" she said. "I 'll feel as happy as possible."

She was malicious enough to keep her secret, and she even suspected some malice on her cousin's part, in looking forward with satisfaction to finding herself proved to be in the right when the appointed hour should come.

And when it did come, and Miss Ayr of Virginia stepped forth arrayed, she was a charming enough vision to have accounted for a good deal of feminine envy and uncharitableness!

The fit of her gown was faultless, and it was a well-nigh faultless figure which was fitted. The color was fresh and pure

and so were the tints of hair, and eyes, and lips, and cheeks. The hat was youth and grace itself, and all smaller details of her toilet were beyond criticism. She was a clever creature, this little Miss Ayr of Virginia, and her present costume gave ample evidence of it.

When the party was ready to set off, she was feeling a wonderful sense of companionship and friendliness with Stafford, and he with her.

"Stunning, by Jove!" he said, as she climbed to her place beside him. "It looks as if Miss Ayr of Virginia was going to beat them on their own ground. It's really almost too bad of you!"

What a pleasant, light-hearted, boyish creature he was, she thought, and how nice to be so cordially liked by him and to bowl along in the place of honor at his side, the observed and admired of all who passed them!

And not the least pleasant part of it all was the sense of *bien-être*, which came from

the consciousness of her irreproachable costume. It made her feel brave and confident even with the women of the party, and, this time, her somewhat timid overtures to them were far more kindly met. Gladys, who had elected to be the one of her cousins to accompany her, treated her rather differently, she thought, and, altogether, it was a delightful occasion.

"Are you enjoying yourself?" asked Stafford, just as this thought was in her mind.

"Oh, yes, tremendously," she said. "For the first time since I got here I am almost forgetting to be home-sick. Almost, but not quite."

"Home-sick?" he said. "I do n't like that. Why should you be home-sick?"

"Oh, I've almost died of it," said Carter. "The other day, going to the races, on the line of all those splendid carriages I saw, at the side of the road, an old horse eating oats out of a nose-bag, with a ragged old darkey standing by, and somehow it

made me think so of home that I almost burst into tears."

"But why should you feel so? What is it that you miss so much that could not be supplied here?"

"Here? Oh, I could never feel at home here! What I miss is simply everything—the earth, and the sky, and the trees, and the darkies, and the people, and everything!"

"I should like to see that wonderful country. Will you let me, some day?"

"Strangers are always welcome in the South," she said; "but you would remain a stranger there. The life would never suit you."

She felt instinctively that he did not like this, and—out of pure compassion at having hurt a person who had been so good to her—she set to work to make herself as delightful to him as she could, and with such success that Gladys, who was taking notes from a back seat, formed a conclusion, which definitely

modified her future course toward her cousin.

So marked was this that when, at the end of the excursion, Gladys invited their late host to come and dine informally that evening, if he had no other engagement, and when he had delightedly accepted and driven away, she followed her little country cousin to her room and offered in the pleasantest way to help her out with an evening toilet.

"I have one, thank you," Carter said, "but I 'm just as much obliged."

She had n't it in her to bear malice, and far enough from her consciousness was any suspicion of the real reason of her cousin's change toward her. Had she been present a few moments later at a conversation which took place between the three sisters much light would have been thrown upon this point. Here Gladys boldly avowed her belief that Carter would be asked to become Mrs. Stafford. Never, she said, had she seen Jim treat any girl as he treated

Carter, and without the necessity of much talk about it, the sisters were unanimously agreed that it would be a good thing to have Jim Stafford in the family on any terms. It was only too evident that there was no chance of this on terms more close and acceptable than the present ones, for his attitude toward the Miss Ayrs of New York had been strictly limited to the off-hand intercourse of old friends and neighbors. And Carter, in her guileless heart, would never have imagined a further reason yet. This existed in the fact that Jim Stafford had been so ardently angled for by so many of their friends that it would be a triumph, in a way, to the Ayr girls to have him even for a cousin. Their thoughts had gone even farther than that, and they looked forward to being on cousinly terms in the establishment over which Jim Stafford's wife would preside in New York.

So when Carter came down to dinner that evening, innocent as a lamb of any such designs and imaginings as occupied

the worldly hearts about her, she was received with great friendliness by her cousins, and her gown was pronounced "as smart as possible" by Gladys, "very *chic*" by Ethel, and to have "quite a *cachet*" by Rosamond.

And indeed it was a charming thing, and she was a charming thing in it! No one could have dreamed of such a neck and such arms, under their former unbeautiful coverings, and the clear cool green of her crêpey draperies brought out the pure tints of skin and hair and eyes.

Jim Stafford, when he came, looked at her quite adoringly, and nobody could wonder! One or two others of the bachelor *habitués* of the house had been bidden to the impromptu dinner and Carter drew all eyes upon herself, with as little volition and consciousness as a magnet.

After dinner, Stafford got hold of the guitar and beguiled her into the library, and she sang to him about God's saints and the gospel train and the Bridegroom,

until every other member of the party followed and gathered around her.

This was more agreeable to Carter, perhaps, than to her companion, for he found any further *tête-à-tête* with her impossible, and, to make up for it, he asked her, on leaving, if he could see her tomorrow at some appointed hour. She said yes, certainly, and fixed the time. Gladys, who happened to be standing not far off, heard this.

When Carter went to her room that night, she looked long, and with great satisfaction at the image which the cheval glass reflected. She knew that she was pretty, but, indeed, she had never dreamed that she could look so charming as this. Money was a wonderful thing, and she would not be able in the future to wear such clothes as these, and she did like them! She liked admiration, too, and tonight she had had it unstintedly. Whence was it, then, that came this sense of lack, of wanting, of imperfectness? She felt

it, to a degree that positively oppressed her, and as she doffed her brave attire and made herself ready for bed she could scarcely keep the tears out of her eyes. Two, at least, refused to be suppressed and lay wet upon her cheek as she finally fell asleep.

Next morning, when she joined her three cousins in their upstairs sitting-room, a very smiling welcome greeted her.

"We were just talking of you, Carter," Gladys said, "and of how well you looked last night. Jim Stafford thought so, evidently! And, by-the-way, we were wondering how much you really know about Jim Stafford."

"I don't know a great deal," Carter answered. "Very little, in fact, except that he is very kind and nice; and also, as I hear, very rich."

"Do you know how rich?" said Gladys, with solemnity.

"No! How should I?" said Carter, looking rather wondering.

"I do n't know myself," said Gladys, "but it 's a great many millions in money; besides a superb house, horses, carriages, pictures, and all sorts of things."

"And a house at Newport," put in Ethel, "a simply magnificent place!"

"And a yacht that is absolute perfection!" said Rosamond.

"And a collection of pearls of all colors, set in bracelets, necklaces and rings, which he has been collecting for years as a wedding present for his wife," said Gladys with grave ardor.

Indeed, the solemnity of all these announcements seemed to Carter so funny that she said with a little laugh:

"What are you all so serious about? There does not seem to me anything profoundly solemn in all this."

"The subject of Jim Stafford is more serious than you realize, perhaps," said Gladys. "I think it best to tell you that we all think that he is going to make you an offer of marriage."

Carter looked from one to the other with genuine surprise.

"I do n't believe it," she said, and the next minute a crimson flush suffused her face, and she added in a tone of indignation, "If there is the least chance of such a thing it must be prevented."

"Prevented!" said three voices at once in different tones of surprise and protest.

"Yes—prevented," Carter said. "I like him too much to want to hurt his feelings, and if what you say is so, he must be stopped before he goes farther."

"Carter Ayr," said Gladys, in a tone of voice thoroughly provoked, "I 'd like to know what you are thinking of and what you expect! You Southern people do act as if you owned the earth! What prospects in life have you got to make you throw away such a chance as this—the most brilliant marriage that any girl here could hope to make! If Jim Stafford asks you to marry him—as I believe

he will—I 'll not believe it that you 'll be such an idiot as to refuse him."

Carter rose to her feet, and flashed upon her a pair of angry eyes.

"Why should I not refuse him?" she said. "There is but one cause for marriage, and that does not here exist. Do you, for an instant, suppose that I, my father's daughter, one of the Ayrs of Virginia, would marry a man for his *millions*, and his *houses*, and his *yachts*, and his *pearls?*"

She hit these several objects off, with a tone which seemed to turn them into chips, and blocks, and sawdust, and shavings, and then, with a sudden softening of all her face, a sudden lowering of her voice and another blush, she said, as she sank back into her seat:

"Besides—to settle the matter at once —I am engaged."

"Engaged!" said her cousins together, and Gladys added:

"To whom, pray? Some neighbor in Virginia?"

Then, once more, Carter sprang to her feet, and stood there palpitating, as she said:

"Yes—to a neighbor in Virginia!—a man whose only earthly possession is a small farm, which is all that is left of a great estate. But he is a man, and not a dude—and he works, instead of playing, and has paid off thousands of dollars of debts which he did not make, working day and night for the money, which, after all, is less than you are accustomed to see thrown away at a day's racing! He is not fashionable, and you would scorn his looks and his dress, too, as you did mine, if he were to come among you—but he is handsomer and stronger than any man I've seen here—and dearer and better than any man in all the world! Do you think I'd give up such a man as that for *money?*" (accentuated as if it had been *dirt!*) "You don't know him, you don't know

me, you do n't know Virginia if you can think that! I like Mr. Stafford, and I hope you are wrong in what you think; but if not, I believe he would understand me, whether you do or not."

"Carter," said her cousin, insistently, "are you going to be fool enough to throw away such a chance as this, for the sake of a mere school-girl's sentiment? You can't play fast and loose, after your Southern fashion, with a man like Jim Stafford. If you throw him aside to-day, you can't count on getting him back."

Carter's eyes were fairly blazing. She moved toward the door, but before she passed it, she turned, and said proudly:

"What I have to say to Mr. Stafford is my own affair and his. You would not understand, but he, I think, would."

What she said to him was simply this (and he gave her occasion to say it, two minutes after she came down to see him, dressed in one of her homely little Virginia gowns):

"Don't say any more, Mr. Stafford, please. You have been so good to me, and I like you so much that I can't bear to make you sorry, but I 'm engaged to be married to a man in Virginia, whom I love with all my heart, and so that settles it."

It settled it simply and at once for the poor young fellow, but he took it hard. New York saw him no more that season, and when Carter was married in the spring his magnificent collection of pearls was sent to Virginia with a note which implored her to take them as a wedding present, and said that unless she consented to wear them, no other woman ever should.

He believed it, poor fellow, but Carter did n't. That was the only thing that comforted her as she stood, with her lover's arm around her waist, turning over the splendid jewels.

"Of course they must go back," she said, "but not just yet. I can't bear to hurt him."

"Poor, poor fellow!" was her companion's response, spoken in tones of heart-felt commiseration, "what a beggar he is, with all his millions, and how criminally rich I feel!"

A New Thing Under the Sun

A New Thing Under the Sun

During the months of summer Belton was usually crowded with city guests, but the last of these departed, as a rule, with the falling leaves, and by the time winter had set in the little town had relapsed into its normal monotony.

One year, however, there was an exception, and Mrs. Bryan, who had pleasant accommodations in her large, old-fashioned house, received, for a stay understood to be indefinite, a city boarder, who arrived in midwinter, and took two of her best rooms at the highest summer rates.

This lady was duly indorsed and recommended — as Mrs. Bryan's boarders were required to be — in spite of the fact that she was coming with the avowed pur-

pose of getting a divorce from her husband.

The new arrival—Mrs. Leith—proved to be young and exceedingly pretty. All her simple, dark costumes were made in the highest fashion, and had the names of the best French dressmakers on their linings. She was an extremely small woman, exquisitely made, and with minutely perfect hands and feet. She had with her an immense Angora cat, and an old negro servant-woman, who had been her nurse. Her companions are mentioned in the order of their estimation in Mrs. Leith's regard. The great, white, sleepy, selfish, unresponsive cat was her very idol; and the old negress, who loved and watched over and toiled and suffered for her, was taken little account of, and even, at times, made the object of unreasonable and unjust irritation. But "Mauma," as her mistress called her, cared nothing whatever for that. The days of slavery were over, but she was held by chains

more binding and restrictive than any that they could forge or break.

This old woman had an immense power of reserve, and her lips were sealed as to any revelations concerning the past life of her young mistress. Mrs. Bryan, however, made a few notes from her own observation. She noticed, for instance, that Mrs. Leith always looked forward to the coming of the mail with an eager interest, and that, no matter what letters were received, the expression of her face was always the same — disappointment. She wrote few letters, herself, and seemed to take little interest in those that she got. Mrs. Bryan came to know, moreover, that on the not infrequent occasions when Mrs. Leith would excuse herself from coming to meals, the cause was generally a fit of crying which, no doubt, gave rise to the headache which Mauma would name as her excuse. Once or twice, when Mrs. Bryan had accidentally got a glimpse of the inner room, where she had gone to make in-

quiries, she had seen the same picture — the old negress in a big rocking-chair before the fire, in her arms her young mistress, dressed in a little silk dressing-gown that looked like a baby's long frock. Mauma was rocking her backward and forward, patting and soothing her, while the poor little creature clung around her neck and sobbed.

The one real interest in Mrs. Leith's life was Fleecy, the Angora cat; and when, at rare intervals, she chose to show off her accomplishments, and catch the rubber ball her mistress rolled on the floor and bring it to her, Mrs. Leith would grow gay, and laugh until her cheeks were flushed with a rosy and becoming color. Mrs. Bryan had sometimes watched this game, when she would go up with her knitting to Mrs. Leith's sitting-room.

She had assisted also at another pastime of Fleecy's, which was more to the cat's fancy, but much less to that of its mistress.

Mrs. Leith had a standing offer among the servants for live mice, which it afforded Fleecy the highest ecstasy to catch. Always, when the poor little captives would be brought (and fortunately they seemed hard to secure, and were not numerous), there would be a sharp conflict in the mind of Mrs. Leith.

"Oh, I hate to see them frightened and tortured so!" she would say; "but nothing in the world gives Fleecy such delight, and they do n't suffer long. Still, I wish Fleecy liked the dead ones as well."

She would take her darling in her arms, and say: "Mouse, Fleecy, mouse!" and there was no sort of doubt that the cat understood. She would prick up her ears and great plumy tail, and quiver with delighted anticipation. Then, when the trap was opened and the mouse let loose, Mrs. Leith would clap her hands with delight to see the joy and activity of her great, indolent pet as she would scamper about, over chairs and under tables, wildly

pursuing her prey. Invariably, however, when the final moment came, and the piteous little dying squeaks would be heard, Mrs. Leith would turn away and shut her eyes tight, and put her fingers in her ears. Sometimes, when Fleecy had finished her meal, and sat licking her lips, and drowsing in complacent repletion by the fire, Mrs. Leith would give way to reproaches of both her pet and herself, and would think of the sufferings of the poor little victim, till the tears came into her eyes. In spite of that, however, when another mouse was offered, the same scene was invariably re-enacted.

She loved this cat with a passionate affection; more, indeed, than that bestowed by many mothers on their children. She spent hours in combing and brushing its long fur and tying on various ribbons, and she often kissed and squeezed it so ardently as to get scratched in return for her tenderness. She called it by a hundred tender names when this would

happen, and blamed herself for her roughness.

There were certain little oddities in Mrs. Leith's behavior, now and then, which Mrs. Bryan was quick to observe. For instance, one day, when some one remarked that Mr. Manning, the lawyer who was conducting her divorce case, was a very handsome man, Mrs. Leith smiled to herself, in a confident, abstracted way that piqued curiosity; and again, when another man was commended for having very delightful manners, Mrs. Leith said with the same look on her face:

"Oh, do you think so, really?"

Even Mrs. Bryan, who was not very imaginative, got the idea that the little creature had some standard in her mind, measured by which she found these men very small.

Mrs. Leith spent almost her entire time in her own room, sometimes singing to herself, to a guitar accompaniment, impassioned love songs that made her

tremble from head to foot with emotion, and often break into uncontrollable weeping. When she was in her not infrequent fits of despondency, even Fleecy was no comfort to her, and she would sometimes complain that she slept so contentedly on the rug.

"She does n't love me. She only wants to eat and sleep and be comfortable," she said one day, in an outburst of despair. "Oh, nobody loves me, nobody loves me! If God would only let me die!"

"Mauma loves you, honey," the old woman answered. "God ain' gwine tek you 'way from po' ole Mauma."

"What 's the use of your loving me, when you do n't love Bertie? You hate him, and you hate Fleecy, too—you know you do! I do n't want anybody to love me, if they do n't love them. Oh, I 'm so wretched!" and she went off into low wails of anguish that subsided, as usual, in sleep.

Many a time would old Mauma sit and hold her so, until her arms and shoulders ached. Small and childish as she was, she was much heavier than a child, but she had no more than a child's consideration for the trouble she gave, and Mauma would no more have reproached her with this than a mother her baby.

Mrs. Bryan, out of sheer pity, began to feel herself growing attached to her boarder. She seemed to make, however, but little progress in her acquaintance, and things remained just as they had begun, until there came a break in the monotony of their intercourse, caused by the sudden illness of Fleecy.

Mrs. Leith flew wildly downstairs, one morning, her face pallid with fear, and dragged the astonished widow up the stairs, exclaiming that Fleecy was dying. When they got into the room, the big white cat was lying on the lounge, stretching and jerking its body, and giving every indication of the vulgar malady of fits. Mauma

was bending over the lounge, but her little mistress flew at her and pulled her away.

"You shan't touch her," she cried, angrily, "go away! You have always hated her, and you 'll be glad if she dies! Oh, Mrs. Bryan, you will help me! Do you think she is going to die? Oh, Fleecy, Fleecy, my poor baby, do n't go and leave me! You are all I 've got in the world."

The old negress shrugged her shoulders and moved away. It was evident that the reproaches of her mistress amounted to nothing with her. Mrs. Bryan, out of pity for the poor child's grief, went to work to try to render aid, and, after a little doctoring, Fleecy showed signs of recovery. The gratitude showered upon Mrs. Bryan was touching to see. Mrs. Leith, usually so cold and abstracted in her manner, became suddenly affectionate and effusive. She kissed Mrs. Bryan's hands and then her face, and begged her

not to leave her. When she was entirely reassured about Fleecy, and had her darling sleeping on her lap, she suddenly caught hold of Mrs. Bryan's hand and said, impulsively :

"You are good and kind. You have a tender, loving heart. I 'd like to talk to you, and tell you about my troubles. May I ? Oh, if you knew how unhappy I am, and how no one understands and sympathizes with me ! "

Mrs. Bryan moved closer to her, and begged her to speak, assuring her, beforehand, of the sympathy which showed plainly in her face.

Then, still holding the big cat on her lap, and touching it with tenderness from time to time, Mrs. Leith told her story.

A singular one it was, and Mrs. Bryan, as she listened, could not altogether wonder at the friends who had refused to sympathize with Mrs. Leith in her position.

The unhappy young wife, who was in

Belton for the sole purpose of getting a divorce from her husband, began her narration by describing him in terms of glowing enthusiasm, as the handsomest, the cleverest, the most charming, gifted, lovable being that mind could conceive. "You think Mr. Manning is handsome," she said, "and you thought that other man's manners were charming! If you could see Bertie! It makes me cross to hear Mr. Manning and those other people talked about. Why, Bertie is like what you would imagine a great big angel to be, if it had n't any wings and wore clothes. He 's so tall and strong that he can lift me about like a baby, and never get tired in his shoulders, as Mauma does after the least little while. He 's got a figure more beautiful than any statue that was ever made, and hair that curls in little shiny rings the moment he lets it get long enough. Oh, once, in Italy," she broke off, as a sudden memory came to her, "I persuaded him to let it grow. We were

in the country, where no one knew us, and it came down all about his neck. It was so funny. We used to row a great deal, and, though he wore a big peasant's hat, he got brown as a berry, but his neck was always fair, where his hair hung over it. I used to say it was the only place left for me to kiss, because the sun had made him brown as an Italian, so I would n't kiss him, except there. I always said I felt as if I were kissing some Italian woman's husband. O Mrs. Bryan," she said, in a choking voice of pain, "we were so happy then! He loved me so! He never got tired of me, and could n't bear me out of his sight. I do n't see why I did n't die then. If joy could kill, I would have." She paused a second, and then went on, with a return to her former tone: "You would have to see him before you could understand how poor all other men seem after him. His voice is like a great strong lark's, that can sing and fly together. He used to sing

until he could be heard for miles, all the time that he was rowing me over those tremendous waves that shook our little boat about like a chip. I never dared to go with any one else, but with him I never had a fear. I often used to think we would be drowned, but I would laugh at the idea, and tell him it would be only to wake up in another heaven with him. Then you were talking about manners! Oh, you can't have any idea of Bertie's manners, and I could n't give you any! He never goes into a crowded room that everybody does n't look at him and speak about him. He seems to know, at once, the ways of every country, and never makes a mistake. And gentle! why, he 's gentler than any woman that ever lived! Children always love him, and so do animals. Fleecy loves him fifty times better than she does me, and you ought to see how he loves Fleecy. I thought it was so good of him to let me keep my dear kitty. I offered to give her up, but

he would not let me. I know she 'd be happier with Bertie, and I did offer, but when he said no, I was glad, for Fleecy was all I had left. If Bertie had been here to-night, he would have nursed and doctored her just as you did, instead of getting cross like Mauma. Sometimes I hate Mauma!" she broke off with a vicious snap of her little regular teeth.

For a long time Mrs. Leith talked on, dwelling on the attractions and perfections of the man from whom she was seeking a divorce, until finally her companion, unable to keep down her curiosity any longer, said abruptly:

"I can't help asking, Mrs. Leith, why you want to be divorced from such a man as that."

"Want to be!" she exclaimed, rising to her feet, and forgetting even Fleecy, who fell to the floor. "Want to be? Why, I should think you could see that it is killing me! Do I look like a person doing what she wants to do? If you had

seen me a year ago you would not say that. Look at my poor thin arms," pulling up her sleeve. "They used to be so plump and round that Bertie never tired of kissing and praising them. And look at my face, so white and pasty, when I used to have a color like a rose! Oh, I'm glad he can't see me now! I'm glad he does n't know how I have changed!"

"Then why do you get the divorce?" Mrs. Bryan could n't help saying. "You are doing it, and not he — are n't you? What makes you do it?"

"Because he wants it," she answered with a look of defiance. She expected nothing else but that Mrs. Bryan would hold with all her other friends, and she wanted to show her, at once, that she did not care.

"And why does he want it?"

"Because he is tired of me — simply that. No one but me can make allowances for him, and I do n't expect it. I

know you are shocked and indignant and all that, but you may save yourself the trouble. It is terrible and unfortunate for me, of course, but I can see, if no one else does, that it is not unnatural. He is highly cultivated and intellectual, and I am not a companion for him. It was long before I would acknowledge it, but I have looked it in the face at last. I was never worthy of him — but oh, while he loved me, it did n't matter in the least that I was so inferior to him! And he did love me — he did! he did! — as much as he can love anybody — as much, I do believe, as he will ever love that beautiful, wicked woman he is going to marry."

"Going to marry!" exclaimed Mrs. Bryan, almost breathless, but the little creature who stood near by with her cold hands pressed against her burning cheeks, and her excited eyes fixed on the fire, paid no attention to the reflection of astonishment in her voice.

"Yes, going to marry," she said.

"That is why he was so determined to have the divorce. I knew he had begun to weary of me; I knew I had nothing in me to keep the love of a great creature such as he is, but I think he would have stayed with me and let me go on loving him, at least, if he had not seen that widow, who made up her mind to have him the moment she laid eyes on him, and saw how far above other men he was."

"But you could have prevented it! He could n't have got the divorce from you. Did n't he know that?"

"Of course he knew it," she answered, in the petulant tone she often used to Mauma. "He's a man thoroughly informed on every subject. He knew he could never get it, and that the only way was for me to do it. He made a great mistake, though, and gave himself and me six miserable months of suffering."

"How do you mean?"

"He tried to force me to sue for a

divorce," she said; "and used every means that he could think of. My friends were wildly excited, and demanded that I should get the divorce, but they might as well have talked into the air. I had but one answer: 'I love him — love him — do you understand? And there is nothing love cannot forgive!'"

"Love — yes," retorted Mrs. Bryan, now no longer able to control her indignation. "Love is all very well — but where is your pride?"

The tiny creature standing on the rug drew herself to her full height, and looked her in the eyes, as she answered:

"I have none, where he is concerned."

"Merciful goodness!" exclaimed the other, with a deep-drawn breath. "Then if you have n't any pride, what induced you to agree to the divorce?"

"Love," said the other, solemnly. "If he had understood that — if he had made that appeal at first — he might have had his way in the beginning, instead of the

end. If, instead of subjecting me to all the shame and outrage that he made me endure, he had done at first what he did at last, he might have spared himself as well as me much suffering."

"You do n't mean to say you consented because ——"

"Because I loved him," she replied, in a voice beginning to shake, as her eyes began to fill. "Oh, why do I talk about it? No one will ever understand. You are all alike, and blame me, because you do n't know what it is to love, as I love him. He came to me at last, after those awful months, and when he came into the room and shut the door behind him, and I looked up and feasted my hungry eyes on the sight of him, the love that shook my breast then was a thing you other women do n't know. He called my name. 'Mimi,' he said, 'you have it in your power to make me happy, if you will.' And I said: 'I will do anything you ask.' He came then and took me in his arms

and told me he wanted me to get the divorce. He said he was selfish and vile and unworthy of me, that I would be happier without him, and a great deal more such trash, and I told him I had but one desire in the world, and that was to make him happy, and that I would give him the divorce. With those arms around me, and those eyes looking into mine beseechingly, there was nothing I could have denied him — only I had rather it had been the last drop of my blood he had asked for. That was not what he wanted, though, and I gave him what he did want. I asked him if it would not please him better if I were dead, and if he had said yes, I would have killed myself. But he said no, that would make him wretched; he only wanted me to let him be free, and to be free myself to marry some good man who would make me happy as I deserved. He knows that woman is n't good; he told me so himself — at least he said she was utterly different from me, and so much

more fit to be the companion of a poor devil like himself. I don't know how it is," she broke off, passionately, "but if being a devil could make him love me again, I'd be a devil, too, if I could! Of course you're shocked, but I would! Well, no matter what happens, I've got that evening to remember. He had not been pleased with me for so long, that it was like heaven on earth to have him as he was then. He let me sit on his lap, and hold him tight around the neck, and kiss his curls and his eyes and his darling mouth. You need n't look so horrified," she said with sudden resentment, "he was my husband still, and he 's my husband now, and I 'm proud and happy I can say it a little while longer."

At the last words her voice gave way completely, and she threw herself down on the lounge and burst into violent sobbing. It was piteous to see her, and Mrs. Bryan, in spite of the tempestuous indignation this recital had aroused in her, felt her

heart grow soft with sympathy as she looked at the little figure, no bigger than that of many a child of fourteen, shaken with great sobs of anguish — the deep and incurable anguish of a loving and despised wife.

She did her best to comfort her, and forced herself not to criticise, knowing intuitively what the poor little thing must have already suffered at the hands of her friends.

She found, however, that the task of comforting her was an impossible one. All she could do was to soothe and speak lovingly to her, and to avoid abuse of her husband; she felt it would be the cause of hopeless estrangement between them, if she allowed herself to express her true opinion of him.

At last, when Mrs. Leith had consented to be covered up, and made physically comfortable, and had drunk a cup of tea, Mrs. Bryan left her to try to get a nap. She had Fleecy in her arms, with her head

peeping out above the coverlet, and had laid her cheek against it with a degree of affectionateness that she seemed unable to show to the human beings about her.

"It is only because Bertie loves Fleecy, and she loves him," said the little creature, answering the unspoken thought which she had read in Mrs. Bryan's eyes.

As the latter passed through the outer room, where Mauma was sitting at the window running the narrow ribbons in and out of the eyelet holes in Mrs. Leith's dainty French underclothes, she stopped and looked at the old woman inquiringly.

"She bin tell you all 'bout it, has she?" said Mauma, looking up over the top of her brass-rimmed spectacles. "I knowed how it gwine be, soon ez I see you done tech her heart, by nussing o' that black varmint." (It always seemed to give Mauma great satisfaction to apply the word "black" to Fleecy's creamy whiteness.) "I 'm glad you kin mek out to show some likin' fur de dirty thing, en to please

Missy I 'd do it myself, ef I could. De Lord knows ef anythin' kin please her, I want her to have it, but it 's more 'n I got sense to do, to ack like I love dem two darlin's o' hern."

"Then you do n't like Mr. Leith, either?" said Mrs. Bryan, tentatively.

"Like him? Nor 'm, I do n't like him, I do n' like him for nuthin'—a good-for nuthin,' low-life raskill, as ain't worthy to tech Missy's feet! Thar ain' but one thing in the worl' I won' do for Missy, en that 's it! I ain' gwine say I like him, kus I pintedly do n't, en I 'd wring he neck same ez a chicken's, ef I had de chance. Lor', mistiss, you do n' know. You do n' know nuthin'! De sights he is tuk dat air little angel-chile through is enough to tun yer hyar right white. 'Tain' no kine o' shame en meanness he ain' bin heap up on her—a puppus to mek her git de divoce. En you think she 'd do it? Nor 'm, she would n'! She bin quoil wid ev'ry fr'en' she got in de worl' 'long o' that! She

ain' 'low nobody to say nuthin' gin' him. All she say is, 'When you love, you kin furgive anything.' He mought a kep' on, twel jedgmen'-day, en he mought 'a drug her through de streets by de hyar o' her hade, en she would n' nuver 'a' uttered a complaint. De warn' but one way he could 'a' got her to git dat divoce, en he jis dat mean en sneakin' dat he bin foun' dat way out. He come to her at las' wid all he impident, sweet ways, en he jiss coax en beg for it. I knowed den 't was all up. She ain' nuver been able to say no to him in her life, en she could n't say it den. So she tell him. Yes, she do it fur de sake o' makin' him happy en pleased wid her. She sont right off fur de lawyer, en made all de 'rangements. I hear him tell her myself dat 't was easy 'nough to do. Yes, Lord! I reckon 't was easy, wid dem scan'lous doin's o' his! Lor,' honey, you do n' know," and the old woman ended, shaking her head with an air of deep mystery.

The ice once broken between Mrs. Bryan and her boarder, frequent confidences followed, but it was always the same thing, with more or less detail, as to the charm, superiority and lovableness of the husband she had renounced, or was now making it her business in life to renounce. It was evident to Mrs. Bryan that the days passed all too quickly for Mr. Manning's client, and that she clung desperately to the mere form that retained him as her husband.

In the monotonous regularity of her life at Belton she began to improve in health and looks. Mauma attributed it to the fact that she no longer had the torment of discussions and protest from her relatives and friends, who had one and all abandoned her to her own devices. So indomitable a will in so slight a body, it was certainly strange to find. After the promise to her husband she had never faltered, though the idea of the divorce was evidently terrible to her be-

yond words. She told Mrs. Bryan that she was twenty years of age, but it was hard to believe it. She looked a mere slip of a girl, and was made with such exquisite perfection, that that fact seemed to make her look smaller than she really was. Every one who saw her was fascinated by her beauty, but she was cold to all overtures of friendship, and seemed to have exhausted on her husband and Fleecy all her capacity for affection. She still cared scrupulously for her toilet, though she wore only the one or two dark dresses in which she had appeared on first coming to Belton. Her mother had been a Creole, and from this source she had got her little French name, Mimi, which she told Mrs. Bryan her husband usually abbreviated into "Mim." There was also a trace of her French origin in her utterance — a certain peculiarity of the *r* — that gave her a sort of unusualness which added to her charm.

One day, the morning of which had

passed in the usual uneventful way, Mrs. Leith was sitting with Mrs. Bryan in the latter's sitting-room, when a telegram was brought in. Mrs. Bryan took it, and then handed it to her companion, to whom it was addressed. As she read it she sprang to her feet and uttered a cry — unmistakably a cry of joy.

"Read it — he is coming!" she said.

Mrs. Bryan put on her glasses and read these words:

"Must see you on important business. Arrive at eight o'clock. B."

"I must go — I must get ready. Where is Mauma? Mauma!" she called as she hurried from the room, and ran up the stairs.

Half an hour later Mrs. Bryan went to her boarder's room. She found everything in confusion. Trunks stood open in the middle of the floor; Eastern stuffs were scattered all about; exquisite dresses were lying in heaps, and poor old Mauma, with protest written on the very curve of her

back, was diving into a trunk, and tranquilly accepting a scolding for not knowing where some indispensable article was.

"I am going to hang these stuffs about the room, and get out a few ornaments," Mrs. Leith explained. "I won't hurt anything, but Bertie does so love to see things look 'homey and comfy,' as he calls it. Will you send some one to the florist, and tell him I want lots of flowers—all that he has? Oh, Mrs. Bryan, do tell me—honestly and candidly—which of these dresses I look best in. You see, I can't tell just what humor he will be in. Sometimes he likes to see me dressed as richly as possible — and then again I can't be too simple. Oh, yes, I forgot — I know what I'll wear! I'd rather he'd see me very simple — for I can imagine he's seen plenty of magnificence lately. I'll wear just this little white *crêpe* gown — one he used to love. Perhaps he'll remember he praised it once, and be pleased at my remembering. Oh, Mauma, where's the girdle? You don't

seem to know where anything is, and if you 've lost that girdle—" she stopped, with sudden tears of vexation in her eyes.

Mauma came toward her with the girdle in her hand. She darted forward to take it, and gave the old woman a sudden hug, as she said, coaxingly:

"Don't be cross with me to-day, Mauma — please do n't. I 'm so happy. You ought to be glad your child is going to be happy once more in her life. He 's sure to be pleased with me, for I 've done every little thing he wants. Oh, to think I 'm going to see him once more!" Then, with a sudden change of tone, she added: "Don't be vexed with me if I 'm cross and rude to-day. I 'm so wild with joy that I can't stand the suggestion of anything else. And oh, Mrs. Bryan, if you saw him, you would not wonder. Promise me this," she cried, seizing the other woman by both hands with intense earnestness, "promise me that you will go to the door, yourself, when he comes, and

that you 'll just say some little thing to him, so as to make him speak. I want you to hear his voice, and get some idea of his manner. Then, after that, if you talk about Mr. Manning or Mr. Anybody else, I 'll promise to listen to you ! "

Mrs. Bryan agreed to do as she wished, and went away more puzzled and astonished at the ways of her boarder than she had been yet.

Shortly before eight o'clock that evening, Mrs. Bryan, dressed in her neatest black dress, and wearing her freshest cap, went up to Mrs. Leith's sitting-room. When she entered, she hardly recognized it, and felt as if she must be in a dream. Wax candles, with pink shades, were set about in groups ; the walls and furniture were decorated with rich embroideries and Eastern stuffs, and beautiful flowers were massed together on tables and mantel. Fleecy had been freshly washed, and was ornamented with a gay pink ribbon tied in an enormous bow at the back of her neck,

suspending a little gold bell, which tinkled as she walked about with her great tail in the air. A glowing wood fire burned on the hearth, and on a white fur rug, which had been spread in front of it, stood Mimi. The metamorphosis in her was quite as startling as in the room. She was dressed in a scant and clinging little gown of white *crêpe*, half-low about the throat, from which a fall of creamy lace hung down. It was loosely gathered in about the waist by a silver girdle, and had great flowing sleeves, from which her little hands came out divested of all ornament, except her wedding-ring. Her tiny feet were cased in white slippers worked with silver. But the wonder of it all was her face. It was nothing short of radiantly beautiful this evening. Her eyes sparkled and her cheeks were pink as roses. Her hair, instead of being twisted, as usual, into a decorous knot, was falling free about her shoulders. It was not long, but curly and fluffy as a child's.

"You look about twelve years old," was Mrs. Bryan's comment.

"Bertie always said so, when I wore my hair like this," she answered, delightedly. "He loves it this way best of all. I was so afraid I'd look too old to do it; but if I have grown old and thin, thank the *good* God, it does n't show to-night!"

It was the first expression of religious fervor that Mrs. Bryan had ever heard her use; but as she said this, she clasped her hands and looked upward in a rapture of thanksgiving, the sincerity of which could not be doubted.

"Fleecy, do you know who's coming?" she exclaimed, suddenly catching the big cat up, and looking into its face as if it had been a child's. "Master, Fleecy — master!"

Fleecy certainly pricked up her ears, seeing which her mistress covered her with rapturous kisses, while Mrs. Bryan had more than a suspicion that Fleecy mistook

the word "master" for "mouse;" but this she would not have dared to suggest.

"Is n't it after eight?" said Mimi, looking at the little clock on the mantel. "Oh, if he should n't come!" And at the thought of this the color faded from her cheeks. It came bounding back, however, the next minute, as the door-bell was heard.

When Mrs. Bryan reached the landing at the head of the stairs, she found Mauma leaning over the railing and looking into the hall below.

"Is it Mr. Leith?" Mrs. Bryan asked.

"Yes, it 's him — the ugly buzzard!" answered Mauma, with intense disgust.

It was impossible not to smile at this comment as applied to the man whom Mrs. Bryan now went forward to meet. She acknowledged at once, as she saw him shaking the thick snowflakes from the collar of his coat, that his beauty had not been exaggerated. He was a magnificent, blond creature, with youthful strength and

health in every line of figure and face. A ready smile of good humor rose to his lips, as he took off his hat with a splendid grace and made Mrs. Bryan a bow.

"Mrs. Leith is expecting you," she said. "Will you go up to her sitting-room?"

"Yes, thanks, when I have got rid of some of this snow. I must ask your forgiveness for bringing so much of it into your house. It 's clean, however, and I hope will do no harm."

As he spoke he was taking off his long, fur-lined coat, and as he threw in on a chair, he looked at her again and smiled.

"Oh, I 'll have it brushed for you!" she said, and then stopped short, provoked at having been so civil to the man whom she had intended to treat with cold contempt.

"Walk up-stairs," she said, more distantly. "I 'll go with you, and show you the room."

He gave her the smallest of bows, but

it gave the old widow an agreeable sense of homage. As he preceded her up the stairs, he said, in a voice no one could fail to find delightful:

"What a fascinating old house you have!"

The compliment was agreeable to her, but at the same time she felt a certain indignation that he could be so unmoved at the prospect of an interview which had put that poor child, waiting yonder, in a fever of agitation.

Mauma had disappeared from the landing, and when Mrs. Bryan had pointed out the door, she turned and went downstairs. She heard his quick knock, and then the turn of the knob. As she looked back, he was just disappearing and closing the door after him.

In the room beyond that closed door intense silence reigned for some moments. Leith had come no farther than across the threshold, and stood with his back against the door. Then, undoubtedly, Fleecy rec-

ognized him, for she came forward and began to rub against his legs, making a purring noise distinctly audible in the silent room. Fleecy's mistress stood on the rug intensely still, with her hands clasped tight together.

Presently the man spoke, in his very gentlest voice.

"Fleecy is glad to see me," he said in a tone of tender reproach.

"And so am I! Oh, Bertie!" she gasped, catching her breath with a sort of sob.

"Are you?" he said, and, standing where he was, he held out his arms. In a second she had flown to them, and the great man had lifted her off her feet and caught her to his breast and held her there. She clung with both arms around his neck, and laid her face in the hollow of his throat. For a few seconds neither spoke, and then he put her down, still holding one of her hands, and led her so across the room.

"So you are glad to see me, Mim!"

he said, standing on the hearth-rug, and taking her little face between his large, beautiful hands.

"I worship you," she said, looking up at him, through two big tears.

"So you 're just as big a goose as ever!" he said, almost in a whisper, still holding her so and looking down at her. "I suppose I ought to be sorry, but do you think I am? Well, I 'm not. I 'm glad!" Impossible to describe the winning charm of this man's manner, or the tender beauty of his face as he said this. "But stand off and let me look at you," he went on, loosing her face to take her two hands and hold her at arm's length by them. "Who said you were losing your beauty? It's not so. You 're absolutely bewitching. I doubt — now I 'm going to tell you something that will make you happy for a year—I seriously doubt, upon my word of honor, whether any one else in the world is so pretty."

She smiled until her cheeks dimpled,

but the next moment the tears had sprung to her eyes.

"What does it matter," she said, "if you do n't care?"

"Do n't I, though? I can tell you I do care tremendously. Do you suppose, after all that's been between you and me, that I shall lose interest in you and never care what happens to you in the future?"

"But if we never see each other——"

"Yes, I know," he said hurriedly. "That 's pretty hard, poor baby! But do n't think, in spite of all that's happened, do n't think I'm not sorry for you. Sometimes, when I think about how unhappy and lonely you are, it drives me wild. I have to go to the theatre, or play polo, or do something to make me forget it. There 's one thought that always consoles me, however, and that is that you 'll be well rid of such a scamp as I am. I 've been a brute to you, Mimi, and one thing that brought me here was to ask you to forgive me."

"There's nothing to forgive, Bertie; I've never had one hard feeling toward you," she answered in a low and resolutely steadied voice.

"That's because you're an angel on earth, not because I have n't treated you abominably. I know it and confess it freely, but I hate to think about it."

"Then do n't think about it, our last evening together."

The words almost choked her, and he saw her throat swell; he saw, too, that she was making a tremendous effort not to cry. They had sat down in two chairs in front of the fire, and were looking away from each other. After a short silence the man turned toward her, compelling her, by his persistent gaze, to turn her eyes to his. Then he said:

"It is n't natural for us to sit together like this. You used to—" He smiled and laid his hand on his knee. She came at once and took the seat, and when she had done so, he lifted one of her arms

and laid it around his neck. Then he laughed—a low laugh of appreciative amusement.

"I 'm sure I do n't know whether this is proper or not," he said, "and I suppose you can't inform me. By Jove, this *is* a situation! Come, Mim, I always said you had no sense of humor, but you can't help seeing the fun of this!"

The poor child tried her best to smile, but perhaps his accusation of her was not unjust, for the effect was a complete failure, and she had to hide her face against his neck to conceal the fact that tears had come instead of smiles.

"Do n't try to make me laugh," she said; "if you do, I 'm sure to cry, and I do not want to do that. It always made you angry to see me cry."

"All right, then, we won't laugh or cry either. We 'll just be sensible, and you 'll show me what a little brick you really are. You 've acted in a way already to win a tremendous respect from me. You can

just remember that. I do n't know another woman who 'd have behaved as well. And, now, let me show you something. Do n't move, it 's just here in my pocket. I had such a sweet idea the other day. You see," he went on, as she sat up to look, "I knew you 'd feel badly about leaving off the ring, when—when the time comes, so I 've got you another—not plain gold, of course, but one you can always wear, in place of it, for my sake. Is n't it a little beauty ?" He opened his hand and showed her a ring set with two very perfect pearls, one white and one black.

"The white 's for you, and the black 's for me," he said, laughing, as he slipped it on her finger. "I knew it would fit," he went on, "for *I* knew what a mite of a hand it was for ! The man thought it was for a child."

"Oh, how dear, how lovely, how beautiful it is !" said Mimi. "How good you were to think of it ! But, Bertie—" She hesitated a moment, and then said: "You

won't be vexed if I ask you something, will you?"

"I do n't know," he said, with a slight frown. "I do n't like questions."

"Oh, I know that—and I 'm not going to inquire into anything! You need n't be afraid of that. All I want is to know whether—when the time comes—I 'll be obliged to take off my wedding-ring? Could n't I wear it still?"

She looked into his face with the most earnest beseeching, and evidently with intense anxiety as to his reply.

"Oh, I suppose you could — if you wanted to! I do n't see why not. I never heard of anyone's doing it, but of course you can keep it on, if it will be a comfort to you. It 's a natural enough wish. Precious thing! I declare it 's perfectly touching!"

"Oh, thank you, Bertie, *thank* you!" she cried, throwing her arms around his neck again. "You do n't know what a load you have taken off my mind!"

"Poor little Mim," he said, gently stroking her hair, "how you can care as you do about such a devil of a scamp as I am is the mystery!"

"You are not — you are good," she said brokenly, "and Bertie, there is just one more thing I want to ask you to let me keep. If you 'll do that, I 'll be satisfied."

"What is it?"

She put her lips to his ear and whispered: "Your name."

He did not answer immediately, and turning to look in his face, she saw that he looked perplexed.

"Upon my word, my darling child, I don't know how that is, but if it can be arranged, of course I am willing," he said.

"Oh, Bertie, Bertie! How can I ever thank you? I was almost afraid to ask it — but it would break my heart to have to give up your name."

"There, then, precious child, you shan't!" he said, soothingly. I 'll talk to the lawyers about it at once. There

are one or two business points on which I have to speak to you — things you will have to give your consent to. That is what I came chiefly to see about — at least that was my excuse, though I wanted to see you, too, and to be sure you had forgiven me. You do believe I 'm sorry for all the pain I 've caused you — do n't you, darling ? "

" Oh, I know you are ! I know you would n't have done it willingly. It was only a misunderstanding. If you had come to me at first and told me what you wanted me to do, I would have done it. It 's the same thing now. There is no need to consult me. All you have to do is to tell me what it is you want me to consent to."

" We can get through with it very quickly, then," he said. " I might have known how good and generous you would be ; but you see I can't help making the mistake of thinking you are like the rest of the world, which you are not ! "

He explained to her briefly, then, the points on which he had wanted to confer with her, but found, as she had said, that he had her consent to everything he wished beforehand.

"Oh, do n't let 's spoil our last, last time, by talking about things like that!" she said, presently. "Let 's take Fleecy up between us and be happy this once, as we used to be all the time."

So Fleecy was called and put in the old familiar place, where she nestled snugly down, and purred and dozed in absolute contentment. Both of them caressed the cat in silence for a moment, the tiny hand following the big one up and down its back. Presently Mimi lifted her hand, and said:

"Kiss my ring, please. I should always be regretting it, if I did n't make you do that." He kissed it, and the hand too, holding it against his lips a full moment, so that she felt his breath upon it.

Presently she spoke again: "Have I

been good?" she said. "Are you pleased with me, Bertie? Do tell me so, if you are. I want to remember that you said so."

"Pleased with you, my good little darling? Why, how could I fail to be? The more I see of your goodness, the more convinced I am that I was never worthy of you, and my hope is that, once freed of me, you will meet some man who will deserve you better and make you happy."

She put her little hand over his mouth, so that the last words were stifled, as she said to him, in a voice of keen reproach:

"Bertie, how can you, how dare you think of such a thing? It is the one thing on earth I could n't forgive you for. I can forgive utterly and freely your getting tired of me, and wanting a cleverer, handsomer, more amusing wife. It is nothing but natural that you should, and I can see it. But, oh, my dear darling, do n't believe that I could ever love any one else!

If I thought you would believe that of me, I do n't believe I could help killing myself. Promise me, Bertie; give me your word, you 'll never say such a thing as that again."

"I promise, child; I promise," he replied, half-awed by the intensity of her reproach. "You are a mystery to me, and I 'm a mystery to myself, to have won such love."

"You did n't win it," she said; "you just got it, by being what you are."

"But no one else has ever given it to me — or ever will," he added, with conviction.

"Ah!" she said, with a deep, indrawn breath, sitting upright on his knee, and clasping her hands tight together, "you will find that out, Bertie! I know no one will ever love you as I do."

"I know it too," he said, a look of despondency suddenly crossing his face.

"Bertie," she said, timidly. "Do n't be angry with me if I ask you something."

"I warned you not to ask questions."

"Yes, I know, but I'm not going to do anything to bother you. I promise that, and you know I always keep my word. Only, if you would tell me about things, it would be easier than hearing it from others, or from the papers. But suppose," she was watching his face intently, to see if its expression permitted her to go on, "suppose," she said, timidly, "you were to grow tired of her, and wanted her, for your sake, to give you your freedom. Do you think she'd love you enough to do what I have done?"

A curious smile came suddenly to his face:

"Do what you have done?" he said. "I think she'd probe for my heart with a polished stiletto sooner, or put a spider into my dumpling!"

"Then she loves herself better than she loves you — and I love you better than I love myself!"

She said these words with an infinite

satisfaction, and the expression of her face was triumphant — almost happy. Her cheeks had still that feverish color, and her eyes were wide and brilliant, as they rested with a hungry, expectant look upon his face. He, meantime, sat silent, looking into the fire. When, at last, compelled by her steady gaze, he looked at her, there was such dumb, intense entreaty in her eyes as he could not misunderstand.

"Mim," he said, in a whisper, "do you want me to kiss you?"

The tears sprang to her eyes. "If you would n't mind — just once," she answered.

Their lips met in a long kiss. As he drew backward from it, he put her gently from him, and rose to his feet.

"I must say good-by, now," he said. "It 's time for me to go."

She gave a little cry, and looked at him with a half-distracted gaze, as she said, excitedly:

"Oh, not yet — not yet, surely! I thought you would stay for hours. Oh, Bertie, don't leave me yet — just as we were so happy! My heart will break!"

She turned away with an instinct to conceal from him the agony in her face. He saw her wring her little hands together, and then put them to her lips and bite them, and he knew she was making an effort, for his sake, not to cry. But it was worse still to see this courageous struggle with agony, and his one thought was to get away.

"Bertie," she said, suddenly turning toward him her pallid and terrified face, "I'm going to bear it if I can. I'll do my very best, but if — if I find I can't — if it is going to be like this always, and I can't bear it, would you mind it very much — do you think you could keep from letting it make you unhappy — if I could n't bear it — and killed myself?"

"Mind it! What are you talking about! Why, what do you think I'm made of?

I should never have another happy moment as long as I lived. You would simply make me a miserable man for life."

"Then I won't do it!" she said, hurriedly. "Indeed, indeed, I won't! Don't look at me reproachfully, darling! Forget that I ever thought of that. It was only a moment's frenzy, and it doesn't really amount to anything. I give you my promise not to do it, and I know you'll believe in that."

"Lord, what a relief!" he said, with a great sigh. "You frightened me out of my wits; but of course you didn't mean it. Now that you've promised, I feel safe. You are too good and tender to give me such a life-long sorrow as that would be. You never could have done it; but it gave me a scare. You don't believe it now, but once it is inevitable, you'll get over this extreme feeling about me, and be happy."

"O Bertie," she said, timidly, "I don't want to make you angry, dearest, but if

you only *would n't* say that! I 'm willing for you to think of me as happy, if it would comfort you, but not by losing one atom of my love for you. Try to think of it this way — that I 'm happy because I love you, so that to have given you the wish of your heart makes me happier than to have the wish of my heart. Will you try ? "

" Of course I will, darling. I 'll do anything on earth I can to please you. I 'm sure I ought. But now," glancing at the clock, " I must really be going. I'm obliged to get back on to-night's train."

It was no use struggling any longer. She had no strength for the effort. With the weakness of utter surrender, she threw herself into his arms and sobbed.

" There, there, baby," he said, soothingly. " Do n't cry so, darling. Why, there's lots and lots to make you happy in life yet. I 'll always remember you as the noblest and most unselfish little woman that ever lived ; you 'll have that to comfort

you. Do n't let it make you so wretched, precious child. You and Fleecy will have many merry days together yet."

At the mention of Fleecy, who was contentedly napping on the rug, the poor little creature lifted her head, to say, brokenly :

"Would you like to have Fleecy? You always loved her so. I meant to tell you you could have her if you wanted. I could give her up, if it would please you."

"No, my precious, no — not for the world. I would n't take her from you, for anything. How could you think I 'd be so selfish?"

"Thank you, darling," she sobbed, with her face hidden on his shoulder. "I would n't care so very much to keep her, but that you gave her to me, and loved her, and she was always with us when we were so happy. Oh, Bertie, darling, beloved, precious treasure of my heart, you 've been so good to me ! You made me, for two years, the happiest creature

outside of heaven. If it 's any comfort to you, you can think of that."

"Of course it will be a comfort to me, darling — and, by Jove, I expect to need something to comfort me, when I think of you, and how unhappy I 've made you!"

"Do n't reproach yourself. You could n't help it. I always knew there was nothing in me to keep the love of such a man as you. Oh, Bertie, my husband!" she cried, still clasping his neck, but drawing back that she might look into his eyes, "let me call you by that name once more, for you are still my husband — mine, mine, mine, and no one else's! Call me 'wife' once more, my darling, before we say good-bye."

"My little wife, my little wife — my good, true, noble, unselfish, little wife," he said, while her arms clasped him tighter and tighter, and a shiver shook her little frame from head to foot.

The man's face, too, was seamed with

the lines of pain and disturbance. He looked at the clock and at the door, with the evident desire to escape; but he could not force her from him while she cried and clung like this.

"I 'll tell you what I 'll do," he said, suddenly, as a thought struck him, "I 'll walk you, as I used to do, when you got nervous and unhappy. It always made you quiet — do you remember?"

"Oh, you 're so good to me, darling!" she murmured, as he took her up in his arms like a child, and began to walk up and down the room with her. He was magnificently strong, and she was light and little, so that it was no great tax upon him. Fleecy, with her plumy tail held high and her little gold bell tinkling, joined them, and walked at their side, up and down, up and down. Now and then Mimi would murmur some words of tenderness and gratitude, and he would answer with some soothing caress.

The faculty of humor was not lacking

in his composition, at least, for, in spite of the agitated pain he had just been suffering, when he caught sight of the little procession in passing a mirror, he smiled at his own reflection. The smile was quickly suppressed, however, as he went on speaking to her soothingly. It had — as he had predicted — a marvellous effect. The little thing ceased sobbing, and her breast grew quiet, after its excited heavings.

At last, the clock struck, and he took her to the lounge and laid her down. "I have not another moment," he said, "you will let me go now, like the good, brave darling you are?"

"Yes," she whispered, in a faint, unnatural tone. "I 'll let you go now. Tell me good-by once more."

"Good-by, my darling wife."

"Good-by, my darling husband."

She put her lips up, and he pressed a quick kiss on them, and was gone.

On the landing outside Mauma was sit-

ting, erect and repellent, in every line of figure and face.

"Go to your mistress, Mauma," said Leith. "I trust you to look after her and take good care of her."

"Yes — bress de Lord, I say!" replied Mauma, with cold contempt. "It 's a pow'ful good thing nobody don' trus' *you* — fur that or nuthin'! Dee'd find deeselves mistaken, ef dee did."

With a smile of amusement, the man shook off the sadness that had clung to him, in coming from that room, and said in a gay, though carefully lowered tone:

"You 're just the same as ever, Mauma, I see! Well, I 'm glad of it. I would n't have you changed for anything. I always told your mistress that you were the one woman I had found it impossible to win! So, you see, you have a unique charm for me."

"I hope to de Lord some woman 'll pay you back fur what you 'se bin mek

dat angil-child suffer," was the solemn response, "en you mark my words — de day 's gwine come!"

With his unfailing instinct to escape from what was unpleasant, Leith hurried down the stairs, threw on his coat, and let himself out into the street. As the door closed behind him, Mauma, bending over her little mistress, found that she was in a dead faint.

Restoratives were used, and she at last recovered consciousness; but that evening's ordeal was followed by a long attack of fever, in which death, after promising relief for a while, withdrew and left her to her life of misery.

"There is one blessing in this illness," Mr. Manning said to Mrs. Bryan, when he called one day to inquire for the invalid, "she never knew the day of her divorce. Now she will just recognize the fact that it is past, and that she 's no longer that scoundrel's wife. A more cold-blooded, selfish, unmitigated brute I never came

across, and it 's a blessed thing she 's got the divorce, poor little thing! All the same, it has broken her heart."

By the time the invalid was able to go about again, the papers mentioned the marriage of Herbert Leith, in Spain.

Nothing but the bare fact reached the ears of Mimi, who still bears his name and wears his ring, and bullies Mauma and pampers Fleecy, and looks almost as childish, though never as pretty again, as she did on the night of that parting.

The Thirst and the Draught

The Thirst and the Draught

"The thirst which from the soul doth rise
Doth ask a draught divine!"

"Most extraordinary!"

These words were uttered aloud by Mr. Black as he sat alone in his editorial office, engaged in the laborious work of reading manuscript. He was a reserved man; indeed, he had to be, for nothing but his great self-possession and power of concentration could have enabled him to get through with the duties of his position. With the aid of these, however, he did accomplish them thoroughly and systematically, and was always deliberate in his manner—rarely hurried, and rarely excited.

For this reason it was all the more remarkable that such an exclamation as the one recorded should have escaped him.

His duties included such an endless amount of boredom that the perusal of a manuscript which could have had such words applied to it would have been cause for immense gratulation to him, had it been its merit which had called forth such an expression. As a matter of fact, it was not this, but rather a very extraordinary coincidence.

Mr. Black was possessed of a marvellous insight into the literary demands of his subscribers, and it was this insight which had swelled his list to its present size; and he knew perfectly well that the manuscript now in his hands would have to be refused, as he knew also that the one which he had laid down just before it must share the same fate. And yet to himself, personally, both of these manuscripts had been of deep and peculiar interest.

The first was written in a woman's hand, and was signed "Ethel Ross," and, in the note that had accompanied it, Miss Ethel Ross had given her address in a cer-

tain small and obscure town. This note, as well as the manuscript itself, had a certain *naïveté* about it which gave Mr. Black some insight into the writer. The freedom with which the note was written was of a piece with the freedom with which the manuscript was written, and Mr. Black felt pretty sure that both of them were under the protection of a *nom de guerre*. The young lady calling herself Miss Ethel Ross had taken him into her confidence in the amusing way in which a contributor so often confides in an unknown editor. Mr. Black, however, was a very human-hearted editor, and he never objected to these confidences, and even did what he could to give a friendly word of response to the writers, independent of his judgment of the manuscript.

In this instance the writer had acknowledged the fact that this was her first manuscript, and had added that it would probably be her last! She had always heard, she went on to say, that everybody had

one story in them, and, if that saying were true, this was her story. She had never thought of writing for publication before, she said, but for certain reasons she had suddenly concluded to make the effort, and the accompanying manuscript was the result.

With these data to go upon, Mr. Black, who was a keen student of human nature, had seen the whole thing as plain as a picture before his eyes, even to the understanding of the "certain reasons." He felt sure that the need of money had been the reason — a *motif* for literary effort known to him all too well. There was no indication in either the letter or the manuscript of even the faintest stirring of the divine afflatus of literary creation. There was no hint of any desire for fame. It was distinctly, and he felt sure, honestly, owned, that the writer had emptied herself in this story, and would be incapable of doing anything further. Of all the incentives to writing known to him, the

need of money was the only one that fitted this case. And how powerful must that need have been to have caused a woman to write her heart out, as this woman had done here.

The story, if it could be called a story, was absolutely without literary form, and so unfinished in style that no magazine could have ventured to print it. And yet there breathed through it such an exquisite soul of sweetness, such a spirit of refinement, purity, innocence, aspiration and charm, that Mr. Black was tempted to ask her to re-cast the manuscript, leave out the poor attempt at plot, and let the subtle self-analysis appear in the form of entries in a journal, or letters, or something of that sort. There were two reasons against this, though — one was, that he felt that the girl would have been incapable of doing what he wanted, and would simply have made a mess of it; and the other was, that he positively shrank from exposing to public view the secrets

of the heart of this young girl. For the keynote of this poor story of hers was the aspiration of a young, innocent, and ardent woman after love. What it described was the hardships of a lot keenly interpenetrated with pain, full of privation of body and soul, obscured by perplexities and difficulties on every side, and yet sweetened, illuminated, glorified, by the possibility of the attainment of the supreme good, which, to this being, at least, was to be found only in love. Here was a creature, if ever words painted truth, whose waiting heart was kept both strong and pure by the sanctification of that hope. The manuscript proved beyond a doubt, that, though she could not write, she could love!

Mr. Black had laid it down, with tenderness and regret, and had rather sadly gone about the task of writing her a note to be sent with the returned manuscript. He had had to harden his heart to this sort of thing so often, that he did not flinch from the plain duty before him, and

he would not lead this girl to believe that she could ever write. What he felt like telling her was, that he found himself positively grateful to her for the self-revelation of so pure a heart and so strong a spirit. This, of course, he was not at liberty to express; but he said what he could to soften the blow to her, and he put aside to be returned to the author the manuscript, which was beautifully written (on both sides of the paper, however,) and tied with a bit of blue ribbon.

Then he took up the next manuscript, and, to his relief, found it to be in a man's handwriting. It would help him, he hoped, to efface the impression which its predecessor had made on him. This strong and vigorous writing was unknown to him also, and Mr. Black began to read, with that stirring of possibilities which rises in the jaded mind of the editor at the sight of the work of a perfectly new contributor, and which ninety-nine times out of a hundred ends in disappointment.

This case proved not to be the exceptional one, for this manuscript possessed the same faults of inexperience and lack of literary form as the last one. The letter that accompanied it furnished a further coincidence, in the fact that it acknowledged the use of a *nom de guerre*, and that the present was the the first effort of the writer, who, for certain reasons, had been impelled to write this one story, and would probably never write another. The motive, however, in this case, must have been a different one; for this man, who call himself Hugh Robertson, said that he did n't think his story worth paying for; (This made Mr. Black smile. Could it then be worth publishing?) but he would like to have it come out in this magazine, because its circulation was so large that, in that way, it would reach a great number of readers.

And what, then, was the message for which this Hugh Robertson desired such a wide audience? Mr. Black read the

manuscript attentively, and then, after a brief study of the man, as his character was indicated in his note and his handwriting, he constructed his theory of the case. Here was a man, strong, able, successful, surrounded by conditions of prosperity and ease which flatly contradicted the case of Ethel Ross — and yet the key-note to this soul, too, was the all-powerful one of love. Between the two there was a difference, however, for the woman's heart was attuned to aspiration and the man's to renunciation. The message from the woman's heart was that every trial and earthly evil could be borne without complaint, so long as there remained the possibility of the fulfilment of ideal love. The message from the man's heart was that the fulfilment of ideal love was so well-nigh impossible a thing (though every other fulfilment which the world could give was scant joy in comparison with it), that it behooved one to learn earnestly the lesson of resignation

without cynicism. The man's voice was the stronger of the two, and his message was the nobler, but then there was every indication of its being the outcome of a maturer mind.

It had been as Mr. Black laid down the second manuscript that he had uttered the exclamation already recorded, and the thing that struck him as so very extraordinary was the subtle sort of answering to each other's needs which these two manuscripts conveyed to his mind. The man's was as obviously a self-revelation as the woman's; and the perspicacious editor shrewdly suspected him of being a very shy man, who would not have been able to express himself fully and freely in his own person, and who had therefore sought this means of saying what he had to say to as large an audience as he could reach. Mr. Black could not quite explain why he felt it so, but, in reality, he was convinced that this was a man of influence and importance, who lived a life of active

labor, in which he was able to express himself objectively, but who was now, for the first time, giving his soul a subjective expression in this manuscript. The address given by Hugh Robertson was in a great and populous city. It was also in a locality not very far away from the little town from which Ethel Ross had dated her letter. Mr. Black reflected on this fact rather wistfully. He wished that this man and this woman could meet. He could hardly have been the judge of fiction that he was, without a certain amount of romance in him; but, on the other hand, he had an equal amount of common sense, and he saw that the obvious and practical duty of the present moment was to guard the confidence of his contributors in the discharge of his functions as editor.

So he drew a sheet of paper toward him, and wrote his letter to Hugh Robertson. It was much shorter and more restrained than the former one, for no one could fail to recognize in this man a per-

son quite able to stand on his own feet, and yet Mr. Black felt conscious of a regret in this instance, too. A man so strongly capable of renouncing seemed to him the very man who deserved to possess.

Before he had quite finished, he was interrupted by a pressing business demand, so he thrust both the finished and unfinished letters into the drawer of his desk, together with the letters to which they were the answers. Before he left the room, he called one of his assistants and delivered to him the two manuscripts, to be put up for return, and giving the addresses, told the clerk to send on the manuscripts, and he would forward, later in the day, his letters to the two authors.

He hurried away from the room then, and the clerk took the two manuscripts into the outer office, put them up with great precision and care, and in all unconsciousness sent Hugh Robertson's manuscript to Ethel Ross, and Ethel Ross's

manuscript to Hugh Robertson. He had understood Mr. Black's very explicit directions, but, in putting up and sealing the two parcels, he had mixed them.

So it came to pass that when Miss Ethel Ross — whose real name, in full, was Ethel Ross Duncan — went on her daily mission to the little postoffice of the small country town, she received one day, not the envelope containing a check, for which she so mightily longed, but a bulky package, which made her very young and ardent heart sink low within her. She really had not expected to have her story returned. It had seemed to her, as she had written it with breathless agitation, in stolen moments, alone in her chamber at night, so palpitatingly interesting, that, as she had ended it, she had felt a positive certainty of seeing those thrilling words turned into print, and of having, in exchange for it, a check which should be large enough for her to carry out a passionate desire of her heart.

It was with difficulty that she could repress her tears as she took the package, which had suddenly become so stale and poor and worthless a thing, and walked homeward with it.

It could hardly be called a home to which she was going back, for she had neither father nor mother to give that sacred character to the shabby little house she now approached. But this house contained, all the same, the being who was at once the source of the sweetest pleasure and the keenest pain in her young life. This was her little brother, who, long ago, had had an injury from a fall, and who had been an invalid and a cripple ever since. The whole responsibility of his care, as well as his support, was upon Ethel, and she had been able to discharge it by means of a position in the village school, which paid her just enough for the bare living of the two. For years her brother's case had been considered hopeless, and the local doctor, saying he

could do no good, had not kept up his visits. Lately, however, Ethel had heard of wonderful things achieved by a distinguished surgeon in a great city not far away, and it had now became an ardent hope in her heart to take little Bob there. She confided this wish to the woman with whom they boarded, but the rural mind is slow to catch enthusiasm, and she had only responded by saying that it would take more money than ever she could scrape together. Ethel had managed to save a little by great economy, and she calculated that this would cover the traveling expenses, if only she could get from somewhere enough to pay the doctor.

This had been the spur that had led her to make that desperate effort with the story, and to lay bare the deepest and most sacred feelings of her heart. She was a very reserved girl, and she never could have done it, but for the safety of distance, and the protection of a name that was not her own.

Well, she had done it, and done it conscientiously. She had "dipped her pen in herself" and written out of her own heart, and this was the result — to have the record of her soul-life returned with thanks, or perhaps without them. She felt no interest in opening the packet, and went and thrust it out of sight in the back of a drawer in her own room as soon as she reached the house. Bob was in pain, and he called to her crossly, and complained because she had left him. He was often impatient with her, and she generally bore it sweetly; but to-day it cut and irritated her.

She said nothing, however, as she took off her hat and came to the side of the couch where he was lying. The child looked up and saw tears in her eyes, and his face and tone grew more resentful still.

"What are you crying about?" he said. "What business have *you* to cry, when you are well and strong, and you can

walk and run and go about wherever you please, and never have an ache or a pain? And then you have the 'cheek' to tell me to be brave, and to bear my pain, and not to cry!"

"O Bobby, you are right!" she said. "I ought not to cry and be a coward, and I *am* ashamed of it; but something has happened that has disappointed me so dreadfully. However, I 'll try to be brave about it, and remember the lessons I have tried to teach to you. I wish I could help you — poor little Bob! It *is* awful, *awful*, to have to suffer all the time as you do; but, at least, you do n't suffer in your mind — do you? You know I always take care of you and make you as comfortable as I can. Tell me that, Bobby, for it comforts me more than anything in the world to think of that."

"Of course, I know you will take care of me," said the child; "but is nobody ever going to do anything to make me any better? Am I going to lie and suffer all

my life, and never be strong and well like other boys?"

"O Bobby, I don't know! I don't know!" said the poor girl, remembering, with a pang, the failure of the only effort it had been in her power to make. "I want to take you to the city to see that great doctor, for I think he might be able to help you. I will do it, if I ever can, but poor sister can do so little to make money, and it takes money to do a thing like that."

"Yes, I know," said the boy, with a certain change in his tone. "When I was little, I used to think I'd make money for you. I used to say you were too pretty to work, and that I would work for you. When Mother died and the pension stopped, I thought if you'd work for me a little while, I'd soon be able to work for you, and I would have done it, if I had not had that fall. Oh, why didn't it kill me at once! I wish it had!"

"No, my Bobby, no!" said Ethel,

bending over him and drawing his arm around her neck. "If you had died, poor sister would have had no one in the world to love; and that would be the worst thing that could happen to anybody."

"It 's not so bad as being lame," said the boy.

"O Bobby, I think it 's worse!" said Ethel, half involuntarily.

"Then it shows how much you know about it!" said Bobby; and Ethel made haste to soothe and reassure him, and tell him how much she sympathized with his trouble, and stifled back the wish that he, or somebody, could sympathize with hers.

When night came at last, and the child had gone to sleep, and Ethel was alone in her little room that opened into his, she softly closed the door between them, and gave herself up to the luxury of a good cry. It was one of the few luxuries within her reach; she did not often indulge herself in this, but to-night she felt she must. It was this craving for sym-

pathy which brought it on her — the passionate wish that somebody understood her and was aware of the struggle she made continually, by day and by night, to still the craving of her heart for love. She loved Bobby, but he was an unceasing care to her, and she wanted somebody to care for her, as she cared for him. If she had, how ardently grateful would she be for such care and protection — and how little he seemed to respond to or appreciate it! Of course, it was not to be expected of a crippled boy, continually preoccupied by pain, and, as a rule, she never thought of expecting it. But to-night she felt that need of being understood swelling up within her so passionately, that it seemed almost more than she could bear.

When she had cried until there seemed to be no more tears left to shed, she got up and went to the old dressing-table to prepare for bed. She looked at herself, half bitterly, as she realized how useless all those foolish tears had been. She

might as well make up her mind that her lot in life was to be drudgery and disappointment, and that no one would ever really understand her or enter into the feelings of her heart.

She pulled open a drawer to get something out, and as she did so she remembered the manuscript. She took it out and looked at the cold, unsympathetic typewriting on the back. It was foolish of her to shrink from opening it, and she would compel herself to look once more at those poor pages which she had written with such heart throbbings, and sent off with such hopes.

Running a hairpin along the edge of the sealed envelope, she cut it open and drew the contents out. How was this? They looked unfamiliar. There was no binding with blue ribbons, no delicate woman-writing. Instead, she held in her hands a number of loose sheets covered with the strong, distinct, nervous characters of a man's hand. The title of this manuscript

was *The Draught Divine.* The title of hers had been *The Soul-Thirst.* The caption under the title was exactly the one that she had put under hers:

"The thirst which from the soul doth rise
Doth ask a draught divine."

But for this coincidence she would probably have suspected some mistake at the editorial office and put the manuscript by; but after seeing this, she felt that she must read it.

And so, standing fascinated where she was, she turned leaf after leaf, and read breathlessly on. As she did so, the old mirror opposite reflected a picture whose glowing beauty deepened every minute. Here, the divine draught of love was so strongly analyzed, its component parts so comprehendingly described, and its powerful effects so brilliantly demonstrated, that the paper had almost the character of a scientific treatise. The subject, she felt, could scarcely have been handled in this deliberate way but for the very fact that

the writer was in an attitude, not of anticipation, but of renunciation. It mattered little to Ethel that the plot of this story was ill-constructed and illogical, and the situations commonplace and trite. What she saw before her on these sheets, and felt permeating every corner of her soul, was the renunciation of all the ideal conditions of living and loving that her heart aspired to. What this man gave up was what she had always so resolutely claimed —what she had never wavered in demanding and expecting of life, until this very evening, when, for the first time, she had looked in the face of possible renunciation.

But with the reading of this paper she shifted back to her old ground, for here, at least, she felt herself comprehended at last. Not one of all the people with whom her lot had hitherto been cast had ever uttered thoughts and feelings such as these; but here, in this manuscript, were the very echoes of her own soul. Yes, all of them — the loud, sonorous, reverber-

ating ones, no less than the delicate soundings of her finest needs. She looked at the signature at the end, and saw the words, "Hugh Robertson." This gave an individual character to the consciousness that had just entered into her, and the mere knowledge of the existence of such a personality in the world was a stimulating and an exhilarating thought that made her smile.

As she did so, she looked up and caught the reflection of herself in the mirror before her. Happiness, the supreme beautifier, had swiftly done its wonder-work, and she could not fail to realise that she was very fair to see. The knowledge of it gave her pleasure. The power of enjoyment, lately so stultified and depressed, returned to her with a glowing ardor. All the world began suddenly to look more hopeful. Ah, life was sweet, its opportunities were great and precious, its possibilities were divine!

As these thoughts darted through her

mind and illuminated her beautiful face there came a sudden recollection which checked the first and clouded the second—the thought of Bob with his sad burden of pain and helplessness. Oh, how dreadful that such things could be! Could n't it be helped? she wondered. Could n't something be done? Somehow, a new power seemed to have come into her — a power of initiative and action, such as she had never felt before. She suddenly determined that she would write to the great doctor, of whose skill she had heard so much, and ask him if he would examine Bob if she brought him on, and tell her what could be done. The incentive was so strong that she got her desk and wrote the letter at once, explaining that she had no money now, except enough for the bare expenses of the trip, but adding that, if treatment could be had for Bob at a moderate cost, she might hope to save the money for it, if she could pay a little at a time.

She finished the letter, and addressed it in her delicate, characteristic hand to Dr. Arthur H. Hubert, but there she had to stop. It would be necessary to wait until she could get his address.

Ethel waked next morning with a feeling of renewed youth, for which she could not account, until she recollected the manuscript, which, in her ardent way, she had slipped under her pillow, before going to sleep. Perhaps it was to that cause that she was indebted for some very sweet and joy-giving dreams, in which she had lived in such a rose-colored world that, even in returning to the sombreness of the actual one, she brought with her a portion of that lovely hue.

To-day's mail brought her Mr. Black's letter, and made it perfectly clear that this manuscript had been sent her by mistake, instead of her own. The kind words in the letter helped and strengthened her, and the reading of the manuscript had given her such joy that she felt the sting of the

failure of her own half obliterated. She sat down and wrote to Mr. Black, telling him of the mistake, and asking him to give her the address of Hugh Robertson, so that she might send his manuscript to him and ask for her own back, if he should, as she supposed, have received hers. She knew that the more regular way would be to send the manuscript back to Mr. Black; but the fact was, she hated to part with it, and she resorted to this means of keeping it a little longer. She was too refined a girl to have any idea of getting up an acquaintance with the writer of the story in this way, and it would never have occurred to her to do more than let him know that she had read it. That, she thought, she might do, though she did not mention the fact to Mr. Black.

Immediately upon the receipt of her letter Mr. Black wrote and asked that the manuscript might be returned to him, apologizing for the mistake. He said the

addresses of his contributors were a matter of professional confidence, and he felt bound, therefore, to return the manuscript himself. He made many apologies for having also, through a fault in his office, sent her manuscript to Hugh Robertson, and added that he had just received from that gentleman a request for her address, to which he had replied in the same terms as those of his letter to her. As soon as he received her manuscript he would forward it to her, he said.

What he did not say, however, was, that the clerk who had made the mistake had been let off with a lighter reprimand than was usual with Mr. Black, who somehow felt that if he said too much he might be tampering with the designs of Providence.

Dr. Hubert sat alone in his office opening his mail — a great pile of letters and papers and medical journals, relative chiefly to his practice and the working of his hospital. Many of the people

who wrote to the celebrated surgeon from a distance were much surprised, when they came to see him, to find him so young a man. The great success of his surgical practice had brought him almost suddenly into notice and prominence, and now, although he was under forty, he had a well-established and very successful hospital of his own. He was unmarried, despite the fact of such decided personal attractions as made him almost an idol with the ladies; and the current belief was, that he had been "disappointed in love." Although this fact was generally accepted, no one had ever been able to identify the object of this theory. If the more intimate of his friends and patients ventured to question him on this point, he would laughingly defy them to point out the lady; but, confident as he was of their inability to do this, he acknowledged, to his own heart, at least, that it was literally true that he had been "disappointed in love." That was exactly it. No loved woman had

ever disappointed him, but his feelings came from the fact that love itself had disappointed him; and the little god, though long expected and looked for, had resolutely turned his back and looked the other way. So now, at last, Dr. Hubert had made up his mind to be independent of Cupid; and having spent much of his force in restless watching and wooing of him, he had determined to secure a greater power of concentration in his profession by bidding him farewell. He was essentially a deliberate and methodical man, however; and as it was his habit to study and investigate every theory and practice of medicine and surgery before he either accepted or rejected it, and even to formulate his grounds of action in writing, he had written out his theory of love, and formulated to himself the grounds of his rejection of it. The chief reason for this rejection was the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of realizing his ideal. Dr. Hubert was an intensely energetic man,

and the great secret of his success had been in his excellent discrimination between the attainable and unattainable. So in his profession he left the province of abstract and experimental theories to less active men, and only worked along the lines that gave promise of definite results. He was very ambitious in his profession, and he knew that he had so long served it with a divided heart, that he now proposed to do in the matter of love what he had done in all other departments, and give up a search for what plainly appeared to be the unattainable.

Accordingly, it had occurred to him to make the matter more impersonal by writing his thesis on renunciation in the form of a story, and, having written it, to publish it under a *nom de guerre*, and send it to a journal with a large circulation. He was accustomed to having his papers considered important, and he had never written one that appeared to him more so than this. Moreover, he had an absolute

horror of wasted force in any department, and he wanted this paper to be widely read. The message which he delivered in it was a warning to men, and women too, not to spend their best energies in a restless seeking after love, but, rather, after a reasonable amount of time and force had been put into the quest, to make a strong act of renunciation, and to have their faculties unimpeded for whatever work they could find to do.

This was the story which he had sent to Mr. Black's magazine, and which, with Mr. Black's usual admirable promptness, had been returned to him, as he supposed. But, lo! upon opening the envelope he had found another manuscript, written in the beautiful handwriting of a refined woman, tied with a bit of blue ribbon, and having a title strongly allied to his own, and a sub-title that was identical.

Of course he read the manuscript. He began it with interest, which increased to eagerness, and ended in avidity. Whoever

Ethel Ross might be, she had a soul that answered his; a heart that gave back to his heart, throb for throb. He had dashed off a note to Mr. Black, asking for her address, that he might return the manuscript to its author, and Mr. Black had sent him, by this post, the letter in which he had declined to give the address, and had asked that the manuscript might be returned to him.

This was the letter which Dr. Hubert had singled out of the pile before him, recognizing it by the name of the magazine printed in the corner, and pushing all his other mail aside.

He read the letter twice, with a look of distinct disappointment on his face, but mingled with it there was a look of strong determination. He was in the habit of overcoming difficulties, and he did not purpose to let himself be conquered here. He put Mr. Black's communication in a drawer, and drew the remainder of his letters toward him.

He read them rapidly through, putting them by to be answered by his stenographer in the evening, until he came to the one at the bottom of the pile. When he saw the address on this letter, he started. All the rest he had read with business-like composure, but now his face actually flushed. The handwriting looked familiar; its character was peculiar, and he had seen it before — he knew where.

He hastily cut it open and turned to the signature. It was "Ethel R. Duncan." What could it mean? Had she, perchance, read his manuscript, too, and more successful than he, obtained his address and written to him? These questions were soon answered by the reading of the letter.

He found himself addressed simply in his capacity as physician, and the whole tone of the letter was that of a young person speaking to an elder. This grated on him a little, but it was a mere detail, and the main point was, that he found the coveted opportunity, which he had been

prepared to do much to win, just within his grasp.

He held the letter in his hand a moment, and then opening a drawer, and taking out the manuscript eagerly, identified the writing. There could not be a shadow of a doubt. This letter proposed to give him immediately the power to make her acquaintance, by coming on to his hospital at once, and bringing her little brother to him for treatment. This was her wish and design, provided the very scanty means which she acknowledged should not be an obstacle. One point that she made, was the necessity for immediate action, as her school was to re-open in three weeks, and she, at least, would have to return.

Dr. Hubert drew a sheet of paper toward him at once, and wrote to Miss Duncan, taking the tone that it was the most natural thing in the world for people to bring patients to his hospital without any prospect of paying for their treatment, and urging her not to lose a day in

bringing her brother on, saying that the financial part of the transaction could all be settled at some future time, when it had been seen whether or not the patient could be benefitted. This he left to be copied on the typewriter.

Then he wrote a very light and easy letter to Mr. Black, and with the utmost propriety returned the manuscript. He had fancied that it would be a great trial to him to give up that little packet of paper but now, with the opportunity which he had in view, he could let it go willingly, especially as every word of it was inscribed on his heart.

These two matters disposed of, Dr. Hubert got into his buggy, and had himself driven to the hospital. It was not his usual time for coming, and the matron and nurses were thrown into quite a little flutter of surprise at seeing him. He soon explained, however, that he had only come to give explicit orders that Number 29 was not to be given to any one, as he

wished it reserved for a patient whom he was expecting in a day or two. This was his favorite room in the hospital; its wall-paper, furniture, and situation were the very best in the house, and the price of it corresponded to this fact.

When Dr. Hubert sprang into his buggy again, there was a buoyancy in his manner which was unusual, even to this energetic man. A little later, as he came suddenly in view of a florist's window, he put out his hand and jerked up the horse suddenly, to the driver's surprise, and went into the shop. When he came out, he had a rose in his buttonhole, and a big bunch of carnations in his hands. These he smelt with evident pleasure, from time to time, finally bestowing them on a little crippled boy who was one of his patients.

By return of post Dr. Hubert got a letter announcing the day and hour on which the new patient and his sister might be expected.

On that day and hour he sent one of

his young assistant physicians to the station to meet the brother and sister, explaining that they had been very especially commended to his care, and that, as the boy was lame, the young lady might require assistance in moving him.

As he uttered the words "young lady," the possibility crossed his mind that the adjective might possibly be proved to be a mistake. Suppose, after all, she should turn out to be elderly, unlovable, and unbeautiful! He laughed to himself, in ardent rejection of the idea. Such a woman might well have been the author of those two letters, which were models of stiff propriety and reserve, but such a woman could never be the author of that manuscript. When he remembered the free expression of vivid thought and ardent feeling that that story had contained, he felt a positive certainty that the being who had written it would prove to be both young and lovely.

And both young and lovely did she

prove. When "The Doctor," as he was called by all the inmates of the hospital, whether they served and worshipped him as employees or as patients, arrived that afternoon, he paid every visit that was due on the premises before he went to Number 29. These visits were unusually brief, however, and as he consulted his watch before tapping at that door, he saw that he had managed well, and had left himself plenty of time to be deliberate in the examination of this patient and the talking over of his case with his sister.

Certainly it was a youthful voice that called, "Come in," in answer to his knock. He came in, accordingly, and closed the door behind him.

He was a very handsome man, this doctor, and very young for his great reputation. He stood just within the threshold, with his hands resting on his hips in an attitude of much natural grace. Then he bowed politely and took in the two occupants of the room with a keen and con-

centrated gaze, through a pair of very light and polished glasses.

The crippled boy was lying on the bed, and a beautiful, blooming, vigorous young girl was sitting by him in an attitude of expectation, and with a look upon her face that was tinged with a shy timidity. The doctor did not speak at first, having a fancy that she should open the conversation. She stood up, in evident hesitation what to do, and then said :

" Did you want to speak to me about anything ? "

" I fancied you wanted to speak to me," he said.

" You are, perhaps, one of the doctors," said Ethel, not knowing what else to say.

" Yes, I 'm one of the doctors," he said, looking at her keenly all the time, with a self-possession which she found it impossible to imitate. She was so confused, in fact, that she could think of nothing to say but, " Which one ? "

" Dr. Hubert," he said.

"Oh, are there two Dr. Huberts?" she asked. "I did n't know that."

"There is but one Dr. Hubert, so far as I know," he said. "Why do you object to my being he?"

"Oh, really!" said the girl, blushing. "Please excuse me. I thought he would be an old man."

"I 'm glad he ain 't. I hate old men!" put in Bobby, unexpectedly.

"Thank you very much, my boy," said the doctor, advancing to the bed-side. "Your sister, it seems, is disappointed in me. I am afraid I will have to make a big effort to build up her confidence."

"Oh, no, no! It is n't that," said Ethel, eagerly; but he was plainly not attending to her words, as he bent over the bed and looked scrutinizingly into the boy's face, and then took one of the small, thin hands into his, and held it in a watchful sort of way as he turned to the girl and said, with earnest interest:

"Is his general health pretty good?"

"Oh, yes, I think so," began Ethel; but the child interrupted her, roughly:

"Oh, yes, you think so!" he said. "As if you knew how I suffer! You never have an ache or a pain, and you do n't care how *I* feel!"

Ethel was about to speak, when the doctor, catching Bobby by the chin and looking intently into his eyes, said firmly:

"Now look here, my youngster, I 'm going to put a stop to this at once — do you understand? I 'm not going to have your sister spoken to in any such a way as that. She 's your best friend, and she seems to be a good enough one for any boy alive, and I 'd like to see you treat her with a little respect, if you please."

The boy flushed deeply as he realized the impression that he had made upon this new doctor, from whom he hoped so much. He was very angry with himself, and said quickly:

"Perhaps you think I do n't love her, or know how good she is to me. If you

think so, you are wrong. I love her better than all the world, and I know there never was such a good sister; but she does n't mind. She knows how I suffer, and she lets me talk to her like that, when the pain is very bad."

There were tears of regret and mortification in his eyes as he spoke, seeing which the doctor's face grew suddenly very gentle.

"I know how you suffer, even better than she does," he said; "but until I can relieve the suffering, as I hope to do, *I* am not going to let you talk to her like that, both because it must hurt her feelings and because it is unkind and unmanly of you. I know you well enough already to feel sure that you want to bear your troubles like a man, and I am going to help you to do it."

With what infinite comfort did Ethel listen to these words! She had found her poor little brother's tempers almost more than she could battle with at times, and for his own sake she had longed to correct

them, but no one had ever given her any help before. Indeed, it was a new thing to her to be helped in any way, and never had she recognized in any human being such a power of helpfulness as she had already divined to be in this man. She looked at Bobby keenly to see if he appeared to be irritated and angry; but, instead of showing a spirit of peevishness and antagonism toward the person who had given him so decided a rebuke, she saw that the child's eyes were fixed upon the doctor with a look of strong confidence and affectionate appeal.

"Can you make me well?" he said.

"That is more than I can tell you yet," the doctor answered; "but I will do my part, if you do yours. You know, and I know, that this good sister of yours will do hers."

"Yes, I know that better than you," said Bobby; "but what is my part?"

"To be patient and manly, and to do what you are told. Can you do that?"

"I can try," said Bobby, wistfully.

"That is all that any of us can do — try our best. And now, Miss Duncan, if you will do me the kindness to go to the matron's room, at the end of this hall, and tell her to send Dr. Lawson to me here, at once, I will see what is the trouble with this little man. If you will also stay with Mrs. Mills until I send for you to return, you will have the chance to make acquaintance with a very kind and motherly woman, whom you will find prepared to render you any help or service that may be in her power, while you are in the house."

Ethel got up at once, but before leaving she said, while her face grew suddenly white and anxious:

"Can you tell me what you are going to do?"

"Only to make an examination," he said, gently. "I will not hurt him."

Oh, how grateful it was to her heart to find that he cared — cared about hurting

Bobby's body, and cared about hurting her feelings! As the girl left the room and walked down the wide and beautifully clean and bright hall, she was conscious for the first time since childhood of being helped and taken care of, and of having her load of responsibility shared by another.

At the end of about twenty minutes of pleasant talk with Mrs. Mills, a pretty little nurse, with snowy cap and apron, appeared, and with the manner of suppressed agitation, which usually characterized in this establishment those who were the bearers of messages from "The Doctor," she summoned Ethel to an audience with that august individual in his private office.

When Ethel knocked at the door of this attractive room, it was promptly opened from within, and Dr. Hubert, after having closed the door behind her, led her to a chair and sat down facing her. He then began asking her very searching and detailed particulars as to the fall which

Bobby had had, and, when he had ended these, he added :

"And, now, you would like to ask me some questions, would you not? You want to know the result of my examination?"

"If you want to tell me," she said. "I am willing to know as much or as little as you wish."

"You have confidence in me, then?"

"Oh, I have, indeed," said Ethel, "absolute confidence!"

"That is good! — but, this confidence — when did it come to you? From what you have heard of me, or from what you have seen?"

"A good deal from what I have heard, but more from what I have seen. I knew you were a great doctor, but now I know you are good and kind."

"You trust me, then, about your brother? You believe that I will do my utmost for him and for you?"

"Oh, I do!" said Ethel, earnestly.

"Then let me tell you, my dear child, that I feel very certain that I can help him and relieve him of much of the pain, but I have no certainty of curing him. The most that I can do is to help nature out, and wait for results. The treatment will be long, but will inevitably do much good and relieve the pain; I ask nothing, but that you will leave the case to me. Will you?"

"How can you ask? How can I be anything but glad and thankful to do it?" said Ethel, the tears springing to her eyes. "But I have told you —"

"Yes, I know," he interrupted her, "we need n't speak about that now. If you leave the matter to me, you must leave it to me wholly. All that is my affair. I often wait indefinitely for my pay, and it really is n't such an expensive matter as you may suppose. But, as I said before, you must do your part. You must stay here with Bobby, and take care of and amuse him. That will do away with the need of a special nurse."

"Of course I will — until my school begins," said Ethel. "Then I will be obliged to go. That is a matter of life and death to Bobby, and me, too."

"And how long before that does begin?"

"Three weeks," said Ethel, in a tone that was half desperate.

"Three weeks!" said the doctor, quickly. "That is plenty of time to arrange for the future; and now all you have got to do is to be as happy as you can, say your prayers, and leave the rest to me. Now, you can go and see Bobby. I told Lawson to stay with him until you came."

He got up and opened the door for her, as he spoke, and, without knowing why, she carried away a strong impression of charm and strength from the pose of his figure, as he held the door open for her. He was a trained athlete, and not the least part of his personal attractiveness was in his exceptionally handsome figure.

The next day, Bobby was put under

chloroform, and an operation was performed. Ethel was sent to Mrs. Mills' room during this time, and when at last a message arrived for her to come, she found her little brother stretched out very straight and stiff upon a bed, waiting for the plaster jacket, in which he had been cased, to harden. He was still unconscious, but the doctor, who met her at the door, prepared her for a comprehension of everything, by telling her that it was "all right," and that he was more convinced than ever of being able to do Bobby good. The doctor himself was in his working clothes of immaculate white linen, a costume in which those who had been privileged to see him, declared that he looked his very best; and when he bent over Bobby, and took the trouble to explain to Ethel what he had done in the way of straightening and righting things, she felt as if he were a sort of strong good spirit, who had both power and will to lessen the woes of life.

Ethel had feared that the effect of the plaster would be to make the boy, at first, at least, more uncomfortable; but to her delight, she found that the support which it gave was an intense relief to him, and that he seemed every hour to be growing better in body and in mind. The doctor's influence over him was simply unbounded, and a tremendous reformation had evidently begun in temper and disposition.

One afternoon, a few days later, Ethel was sitting telling Bobby a story, when there came a knock at the door. She called "Come in," and to her surprise it was the doctor who entered, although it was out of his usual hospital hours. He wore a long overcoat of tan-colored cloth, had a flower in his button-hole, and held an immaculate top-hat in his gloved hand. Ethel quite started. She had never seen such an imposing gentleman as this, outside of a picture, before.

"I have come to give you a little airing," he said; "you need it, I am sure.

Will you put on your wraps and come down as soon as you are ready? I want to take you to the park."

Then he turned and put his gloved thumb on the button of the electric bell, and, in a moment, a tidy nurse appeared.

"Are you on special duty, this afternoon?" he asked; and having a negative reply, went on: "Then find some story-books or toys and come and amuse this child, if you please. I am going to take Miss Duncan for a little airing."

When Ethel, five minutes later, came downstairs, she found the doctor waiting in the hall, while several people — nurses, patients, etc. — were trying to get a word with him.

But he waved them off, shaking his head and shutting his eyes, with a smile of obstinate dismissal of their claims.

"I am off duty now," he said; "all these things must wait, or you must go to the other doctors. Come, Miss Duncan," and he led the way down the long hall.

As he opened the door for Ethel to go out, she saw, drawn up before the pavement, a handsome drag, with a pair of superb horses, glittering with their heavy harnesses, and with a groom in top-boots standing at their heads.

As she was helped into this imposing equipage, which was as far removed from anything in her former experience as the coach and six was from Cinderella's, the doctor gathered up the reins, while the groom sprang into his place behind, and they started off over the noisy cobble-stones at a swinging pace.

Very soon, however, they had left the city streets behind, and were bowling along at ease over the smooth roads of the beautiful park. And then what delightful talk they had! How her companion drew her out, and provoked her to charming and spontaneous chatter! She was a rather countrified little creature, in spite of her beauty, and perhaps some of the fashionable people, who bowed to Dr.

Hubert in passing, wondered at the shape of her little black hat, and the cut of her dark cloth jacket. If they did, she never suspected it; and if her companion did, it must have troubled him very little, for he had a gleam of positive exultation in his eyes.

It was a memorable drive to them both, and there was such a feeling of spontaneous freedom and confidence in the girl's heart, that, when she got back to Bobby at last, she felt as if she had really known this charming, friendly doctor the whole of her natural life.

"And so you have!" he said to her, next day, when, having sent for her to come to his office, she had made this same remark to him. "I really believe we have known each other always. It only remained for us to meet in bodily presence. But what I sent for you to-day was, to tell you that I had leisure now to listen to what you said you had to tell me about your future plans. I checked you

then, but now I want to hear what it is. Tell me."

"I only wanted to remind you that I must go away very soon," she began.

"You can't go; Bobby needs you," said the doctor, decidedly.

"I know it. I don't see what I am to do. I can go back and send a little money from my salary for his weekly board, but that seems almost preposterous."

"The idea of your leaving seems preposterous," he said. "I really can't let you go. The school must go to the wall."

"Oh! how can you talk so?" she said. "It's the first time that you have seemed uncomprehending."

"I am not uncomprehending," he said; "I am only thinking hard how I can make you comprehend."

"Comprehend what?" she said.

"Shall I tell you?" he asked. "Will you promise me not to be angry, and will you keep your promise?"

"Yes, tell me; I promise," she said. "I do n't believe I could fail to comprehend whatever it is that you have to say to me."

"Then what I have to say is this — what my heart burns to say, what I have had to fight myself, day and night, since the first day of your coming, to keep from saying, is this — that I love you, and that all my hope of joy is to have you for my wife."

She sprang to her feet, and looked at him with wonder and mystification in her eyes.

"Ah!" he said; "you were mistaken. You cannot comprehend how I love you so, when, as you think, I know you so little. But there you are wrong. I know you, as no one else in all the world can possibly know you; and I think you, of all the world, are the one who best knows me. Here, look at this, and tell me if you have ever seen it before."

He took a packet from the drawer at

his side, and put it in her hands. The color flew to her face, and her lips parted in a radiant smile.

"Yes," she said, "I have seen it before. Was this story written by you?"

"It was," he answered; "and it is because I know that you have read it and have understood that it is no story, but the baring of a man's inmost heart, that I say you know me as no one else does. In the same manner also, it has come to pass that I know you."

"You got my manuscript?" she said. "It was you to whom Mr. Black sent it by mistake?"

"It was," he answered; "and perhaps it will not seem strange to you now when I say, we are not strangers, but are intimately, closely, mysteriously known to one another. This knowledge of you, on my part, has led to love — the first real passion of my life. I loved you from the hour that I read that paper. I loved your nature, your mind, your soul. Now that

I have seen you, in all your goodness and loveliness and beauty, I love you beyond all my dreams of love. And you?" he said; "how is it with you, Ethel?"

She looked at him with a slow, half-puzzled, wholly confiding, and happy smile.

"If you had asked me to marry you without telling me this," she said, "I could not have said 'yes.' I might not have told you the reason, but it would have been that my heart was already given to a man whom I had never seen, and who was known to me only as 'Hugh Robertson.'"

"But now," he said, "now that you know that Hugh Robertson is really Arthur Hugh Hubert, what will you say? O Ethel, I love you with the hoarded love of many loveless and lonely years! Will you come to me, and be my wife?"

His eyes were glowing. His face was flushed; his breathing came from him in quick breaths. He did not move toward

her, but stood where he was, and held out his arms.

And Ethel came to them, and as she rested there an instant, and then turned her face upward to receive his kiss, they both felt in that moment's ecstasy the long thirsting of their souls satisfied at last, completely and eternally, by the divine draught of love.

A Bartered Birthright

A Bartered Birthright

After debating the matter for ten years or so, John Hertford had made up his mind to adopt St. Petersburg as a place of residence, and was now on his way back to New York, to order his affairs to that end. He was not rich, but then he was not extravagant, and his moderate income was more than sufficient for the wants of a man who had no one dependent on him, and who had entirely made up his mind not to marry. He had been in love more than once in his life, and yet, ardent as his feelings had been for the objects who aroused that emotion in him, he had never had quite the feeling to make him long to call any woman his wife. The truth was owned to himself in his secret heart — that word "wife" possessed for him a signifi-

cance which involved so much that he had often wondered, in early youth, if he could ever actually find, in one personality, all the qualities of mind and heart and person which he looked for. In maturer years, he had quite satisfied himself that the idea was absurd. So he abandoned his youthful dreams, without any great ado, especially as he had found that life had certain positive compensations for their loss. He made up his mind, however, that he could not accept less than his ideal in marriage, and so, with more or less contentment, he had shaped his life to the demands and dimensions of a bachelor existence, and was looking forward with pleasure to the more deliberate and satisfactory settlement of himself and his belongings at the brilliant capital on his return. He was not indolent, and his taste for art, music and literature gave him plenty of occupation to diversify the life of social pleasure in the midst of which he had cast his lines. He was a very popular man, and yet one

could hardly tell exactly why it was that men and women, and even children, liked him so. His face was strong and interesting rather than handsome, and his figure active and powerful rather than elegant. He had no especial charms of manner, except a supremely winning trait of gentleness, which would have made the eternal happiness of his wife — had there been such a being!

He was not looking forward with much pleasure to his visit to his native country, and had bound himself by the severest obligations to be back in a very short time; and now, on the first day out on his ocean voyage, he found himself wishing that the trip to New York was over, and that he was going back. There would be so many changes among his old friends — so many reminders of the painful fact that youth was passing — a thing he could ignore much better in Russia than in his own land!

He was, like many people whose attach-

ments are warm when made, rather averse to making new acquaintances, from the fact that the ones already possessed kept his faculty of affection sufficiently employed. So, when he glanced over the passenger-list, it was rather satisfactory than otherwise to see there was no name he knew. He had plenty of books with him, and expected to find his time sufficiently occupied in reading, and in escaping from the bores by whom men crossing the ocean are apt to be beset.

It was early in December, and the weather was raw and cold. Hertford was well protected against it, however, and spent much of his time on deck. On the afternoon of the second day out, he had been comfortably settled for some time, absorbed in his book, when, amid the confused sounds of water and machinery and human speech, he heard some words spoken so near him that they compelled the recognition of his consciousness.

"It seems that 's her aunt, and not her

mother," the voice said: and glancing up, Hertford saw two women, who had placed themselves very near him and were evidently discussing some third party of travellers. "I heard the beautiful girl call her 'Auntie,' as I passed. I call the old one the 'Rich Lady,' until I can find out her name, because she's so high and mighty and magnificent. They've got a foreign maid and man-servant with them, and more furs and rugs and foot-warmers and luxuries than any one on the ship. I want you to watch the Rich Lady when she speaks to those servants. I've heard her call them both by name, and they had foreign names unfamiliar to me; but I told some one yesterday evening that, as well as I could make out, she called the maid 'Minion,' and the man 'Varlet'—perhaps her manner helped me a little to this understanding of her words."

The speaker and her companion both laughed, and Hertford, amused, too, followed the direction of their eyes, and soon

identified the two persons under discussion. It was certainly true that they were surrounded by a greater evidence of magnificence in their travelling paraphernalia than any one else he had seen. Their deck-chairs, cushions, rugs, and superb furs made them seem almost unnecessarily luxurious. The older of the two had her large and bony frame stretched out at length on her deck-chair, and her harsh profile, with its thin, aquiline nose and thick, whitish eyebrows was thrown out in high relief against the dark-red cloak worn by her companion, whose head was enveloped in its pointed hood. The girl's face was turned seaward, so that Hertford could not get a glimpse of it. But just as he had seen, in spite of heavy coverings, that the older woman's figure was angular and thin, so he could see, in the younger one's, suggestions of youthful vigor and loveliness. He was conscious of being interested by the mere pose of her head and turn of her throat. Her red cloak was gathered in at

the neck by an infinite number of fine, flat little plaits that broke into free and graceful folds about her shoulders, and covered her arms and hands. Hertford had given no more than a passing glance to the faces of the two women whose conversation he had overheard, and a glance was enough to satisfy him also as to the appearance of the girl's companion; but for several moments he kept his eyes furtively upon the muffled figure and head of the girl herself. As he was looking, a more violent lurch than any that had preceded it tipped the vessel so far on its side that a great wave, which was advancing, broke over the deck and deluged every one with the heavy salt water. In an instant it had receded, leaving the floor of the deck a running stream, and the water standing in little puddles on rugs and cloaks, and wherever it had found a hollow to fill. Most of the passengers laughed good-humoredly, and took it as a joke, while the deck-stewards were brush-

ing them off and mopping up the water. Hertford sat up and shook himself with a smile, and as he did so, he heard his nearest neighbor say:

"Oh, *do* look at the Rich Lady!"

She had drawn herself upward in her chair,the picture of angry protest, and as the assiduous steward hurried to her assistance, she said, indignantly:

"Well! Are we likely to have much more of this?" Quite as if she had put up with as much from the ocean as she proposed to stand!

As the humor of the thing flashed upon Hertford, he glanced at the figure beyond, which had also taken an upright position, and he saw the very loveliest girl-face that he had ever set his eyes on. He not only saw it, but he exchanged with it a glance of sympathetic amusement, which, somehow, seemed to do the work of an acquaintanceship of weeks. If, as George Eliot so profoundly says, "A difference of taste in jokes is a great strain on the

affections," the reverse is equally true; and a sense of liking sprang into being in both of the individuals whose eyes met in that momentary smiling glance. In an instant they looked away from each other. And now the two foreign servants came hurrying up with towels and brushes. Hertford could not distinctly make out the hurried French sentences which the old lady addressed to them, but he soon comprehended the attitude which had suggested the names of "Minion" and "Varlet" to his bright little neighbor.

It soon appeared that it was the Rich Lady's will to go below, and she got to her feet, shaking herself free from her furs, and motioning her niece to follow her. The girl rose obediently, and as the maid came to her assistance, Hertford noticed the gentle and amiable way in which she spoke to the servant, in strong contrast to the manner of the older woman. She, however, responded very submissively to her aunt's wish,

although he thought it possible that she would have preferred to stay. As she passed very near to Hertford she did not look toward him, and so he could venture to look at her. Her profile was exquisite, and her very manner of walking and holding her wraps was full of charm for him. When she was almost out of sight, he obeyed the strong impulse which prompted him to follow, and, leaving all his belongings, he did so, keeping them in sight until they had disappeared into one of the *cabines-de-luxe*, the number of which he easily ascertained. Then he went to the saloon, where he looked at the passenger-list. The names opposite the number of that state-room were: *Mrs. Etheridge and Miss Sheldon; valet et femme-de-chambre.*

He returned to his seat on deck, but his book had lost its interest. There was something in the glance of that girl's eyes which was enthralling. It crowded everything else out of his mind. He sat there thinking for a long time; and he felt it

a real satisfaction when, at last, from some deep recess of his memory he recalled a rhyme which represented to him exactly his present state of mind. He said it to himself, under his breath:

"But if Maud were all that she seemed,
And her smile had all that I dreamed,
Then the world were not so bitter
But a smile could make it sweet."

In the days that followed, Hertford became more completely absorbed in watching this young girl, and wondering and imagining about her, than he had ever been in anything in his life. He never saw her except at a distance, and even then he guarded his looks carefully. The two ladies seemed to have no acquaintances on board, and if they had had, it would have done him no good, for he knew no one to introduce him. Besides, he was not sure he wanted to be introduced. There was more room for the indulgence of dreams as things were now.

And he did indulge himself in dreams,

without restriction. The more he saw of the beautiful young creature, the more adorable she seemed to him. He never met her suddenly, or even caught sight of her red cloak at a distance, that he did not feel a sudden stilling of his heart-beats, followed by thick throbbings that made his next few breaths difficult. Sometimes he would meet her taking exercise on the deck with her aunt, and sometimes she was on the arm of a French maid. Hertford noticed that when the latter was her companion she had generally a gayer and freer air, and he could see that there were the kindest feelings of sympathy and good-will between the two, in spite of their different spheres of life. The woman did not look as if she could have answered to the name of "Minion," in this companionship! When, however, the young girl was with her aunt, Hertford often saw a look of constraint, and even sadness, on her face. This set him to conjecturing, and gave him a fear that

she might be dependent upon this rich and exacting relative, and perhaps a victim to her tyrannies and caprices. The mere suggestion of it stirred in his heart depths of tenderness whose very existence was a surprise to him.

One afternoon, during the last days of the voyage, Hertford had been sitting a long time silently thinking. His thoughts were always on one subject now — the girl who, at this moment, sat in one of the long row of chairs, made fast against the rolling of the vessel. There were, perhaps, half-a dozen people between them, but, although he had not looked toward her since he sat down, he had no consciousness of any human existence about him but hers. He felt, moreover, in his inmost soul, that she had a consciousness of him. He was sure that an electric current of sympathy communicated from his heart to hers. There was nothing whatever external to encourage him in his belief — not a look nor a sign, but it was

a thing stronger than either. And whenever he did meet her eyes, which was rarely, what was it that gave him that inevitable little shock, if it were not a meeting of such currents? Of course, his might be the positive and hers the negative, but he absolutely believed she felt it,too.

As he sat there, watching the cold flutter of the dingy white canvas that covered the life-boat, made fast in front of him, and which was shaken into strong ripples by the winter wind, making a crackling little noise, he liked to think that they both saw and heard the same things, and he longed to ask her if the ridiculous little cannon, with its canvas cover, did not remind her of a child on all fours, under a table-cloth, playing *bogy*. Why could n't he have a little innocent talk with her? The restrictions imposed by society seemed to him most absurd.

He became aware that the people between him and the object of his thoughts were, one by one, going away. At last,

a man and a woman sitting next to him got up and went below, and now, with a quickening of the heart, he realised that the being nearest him, across that row of empty chairs, was the girl whose image had now out-crowded every other from his heart. The maid was on the other side of her, but they were both quite silent. Presently he ventured to turn his head and look toward her. Only her pure profile was in view, but he felt that she saw with her averted eyes that he was looking at her. Her rounded cheek seemed to return his gaze, and he was almost certain that it reddened.

Of course, he might be mistaken in thinking that she had any consciousness of his existence. He had no real evidence of the fact, but the unreal was enough for him. He was always frank, in dealing with himself, though often the reverse of it, in interpreting himself to others. For instance, he had always carefully concealed the fact that he was, by nature, senti-

mental and romantic; but he knew it of himself absolutely. He was not at all surprised to find himself, now, in love with a woman to whom he had never spoken. It had always belonged to his old ideal of himself that he should love at first sight, if he ever loved at all, in the real sense. This girl — if her nature and character corresponded to her personality — was absolutely all that he ever dreamed of; and he had not a fear that, in knowing her, he should find himself disappointed. Indeed, what he felt was, that he absolutely knew her already. It gave him a slight twinge of regret to think she must be so many years younger than himself — it must be ten or twelve, for she could not be over twenty-two or twenty-three. But then she was a being with whom he might renew his youth — indeed, she had already called into fiery life all the most ardent impulses of his earliest manhood. He had made up his mind now that he would make it his first business, on landing, to

get himself formally introduced to her. He had satisfied himself, by marks on their luggage, that their destination was New York, so he knew he was not in danger of losing sight of them. They were sure to belong to his own world, and he knew he could easily make their acquaintance. As he sat there, so near her that by a slight turn of the head he could see her, he felt impatient at the formalities and delays which must be gone through with, before he could go to her boldly and ask her to leave the irksome thraldom of her life with her rich, old aunt, and be his wife. That was exactly what he had to say to her, with as little circumlocution and delay as possible. His mind had never been more definitely made up about anything in his life. It was decidedly pleasing to him to think of her as poor, even though she had the surroundings of riches and luxury. Still, how different to be in the really independent position in which he could place her!

A little thing had happened one day during the voyage, that had touched and pleased him intensely. A poor man had died in the steerage, and a subscription paper was sent around to raise money for his family. When Hertford took it, he ran his eye rather eagerly down the column of names and figures and saw: "Mrs. Etheridge, $100.00," and under it, "Miss Shelton, $1.00." It went to his heart that she had had so little to give, but had not on that account refrained from giving what she could. "Shelton," he kept saying over and over to himself, trying in vain to remember if he had ever known any one of the name. He knew the name of Etheridge as belonging to a rich and influential family in New York, but could recall no definite acquaintance even with them.

There was a lovely winter sunset that evening, and Hertford felt it a delight that his eyes took in the same scene as hers, and felt that the same emotions were

aroused by it in both their hearts. When, at last, she spoke to the maid and rose to go below, he boldly resolved to make a move at the same time, and so he walked the length of the deck behind her, and followed her through the door. It was a delight to him even to catch the tones of her voice as she spoke to the maid. As they turned away in opposite directions, their looks just met. How was it possible, he asked himself, that he could feel what he did from the touch of her eyes, and she feel nothing? He did not believe it!

The next day they landed at New York, and he saw her met by friends whose ardent feeling showed how lovingly welcome she was. They whisked her away in a handsome carriage whose liveried servants, as Hertford observed, showed far more pleasure in their faces at welcoming the young lady, than her august and stately aunt.

Hertford was accorded a cordial welcome by his old friends, and the first thing he

found himself called upon to do was to attend a large ball. He felt disinclined for it, but the possibility of seeing the lovely face that haunted every sleeping and waking minute made him consent. One of his former circle of friends insisted on taking him, and as they drove through the streets, he confided to Hertford the fact that he was in love, and that he expected to see at this ball the object of his affection, who, it appeared, was a rich and charming widow. The former of these attributes was intimated very delicately, but the whole thing seemed to Hertford, in his present romantic state of mind, revoltingly vulgar. How impossible it would be to confide to his companion the feeling that possessed his heart! Any allusion to the money struck him as being unpardonable — and he simply could not understand a man's finding it possible to be in love with a widow. He thought of the lovely maiden on whom his heart was fixed, and the mere memory of her fresh young

beauty made his pulses quicken. But he forced himself to appear interested, and wished his companion all success and happiness.

"The success would certainly secure the happiness," was the answer, "but the trouble is there are a dozen fellows, besides me, trying to marry her, and she declares she will marry no one."

As they got out of the carriage Hertford dismissed the subject from his mind. He had not yet got himself up to the point of making definite inquiries about the lady of his love, and it seemed to him now impossible even to make a confidant of a man whose nature could permit him to talk about being in love with a rich widow!

As the two men walked about the rooms together, each was conscious of being on the watch, but Hertford, for his part, gave no sign. He met a few old acquaintances who remembered him still, but the place was very barren and irksome to him, in spite of its magnificent display, when sud-

denly his companion gave his arm a jerk and said: "There she is!"

But Hertford, too, had caught sight of something that made his heart thump suffocatingly. A few paces from him was a tall, imposing, angular figure with a familiar Roman profile, and at her side was the adorable being he had so worshippingly enshrined in his heart, looking so beautiful in her white ball-dress that his eyes were dazzled with the delight of this vision. Again, as her eyes met his, he felt that their spirits had touched. Out of the delicious confusion caused by that glance, he was roused by the consciousness that he was being formally introduced.

"My friend Mr. Hertford, Miss Shelton — and Mrs. Etheridge."

At the mention of the former name, the tall and sharp-faced lady made him a gracious, if angular, acknowledgment; at the mention of the latter, the beautiful young creature in white looked up into his face and gave him a frank and lovely

smile. She seemed even to half-extend her hand, and was beginning to speak, when Hertford, bewildered, stunned, and only dimly conscious of what he was doing, made a hurried bow, and with some excuse, moved rapidly away.

With a numbed consciousness, and a bewilderment that scarcely allowed him to realize the objects before his eyes, he somehow got through the rooms and out into the street, and, finally, into his own room at the hotel. There he locked himself in, and, without turning up the light, threw himself upon his face on the bed. After ten minutes of such fierce unhappiness as he had never known before, he got up, turned on the light, and looked at his dishevelled figure in the glass. "Have I been crying?" he said to himself, seeing that his cheeks were flushed, his eyes red, and his face dampened either by tears, or by the sweat of pain. With his nature, romantic, sensitive, the blow was a terrible one.

He sat down in a chair, thrust his

fingers into his short locks, and rested his elbows on his knees. With the feeling in him that he could not give up this woman, even for this, he began to struggle with his disappointment. At first, it seemed intolerable that she had once belonged to another man — and he had to adjust his whole being to these changed conditions. He realized far more deeply than ever, how he had fixed his very soul upon her, and he resolved to go on and win her, if he could. He forced himself to realize the fact that she had loved another man, and had suffered for his sake the pangs of widowhood. It was some consolation to him to see that she had outlived them, and he was glad that youth and nature had asserted themselves and enabled her to regain her interest in life. No, he could not give her up, without her own refusal to be his wife. The fact that she had money, too, was intensely unpleasant to him. It was she — Mrs. Etheridge — who had given the hundred dollars to the poor man, and

her arrogant-looking aunt, Miss Shelton, who had given the one dollar! The money was the girl's, then — and she was the "Rich Lady," after all! He could not get used to the idea.

But he had fought out the fight and choked down his disappointment, by the time the ball broke up, and Tom Kennedy, puzzled by his friend's strange conduct, came in search of him.

When Hertford, in his disordered evening-dress, admitted him in answer to his knock, he was able to make up some excuse about having felt a sudden vertigo in the heated room, etc., and to carry it off with some likeness to truth.

"By Jove! I do n't believe she half liked your leaving — the lovely widow, I mean! (There 's but one *she* to me now!) And it seems you had crossed on the steamer together without being acquainted! It 's a wonder she even noticed you — but she did — and she asked three or four times where you were gone. I begin to

be reconciled to your going back so soon, old man. She takes more interest in you than I exactly fancy."

Hertford let him run on with this flippant sort of talk, for the sake of the information he let drop now and then. He discovered that the haughty individual who acted as her chaperon was in reality a poor relation, dependent on her bounty; though, as Kennedy said, she owed everything to this aunt, who had made this rich match for her, and had married her to a husband who died in a year, leaving her a millionaire. This made Hertford wince with pain. The whole interview was frightfully trying, and he was relieved to be alone at last.

He passed a sleepless night, and a restless, impatient morning. In the afternoon he inquired his way to Mrs. Etheridge's house, and rang the bell, sending in his card for the two ladies. Miss Shelton, it turned out, was not at home, but after a few minutes spent in a magnificent draw-

ing-room, down the long vista of which he could see into other superb apartments beyond, the young widow came to him.

Hertford was so entirely sure that they understood each other, that it was all he could do to keep from asking her, then and there, to be his wife. The restrictions of conventionality prevailed, however, and they kept to mere friendly discussion of the events of the voyage, and such things. It was so free and delightful, however, this long talk, that he stayed on and on, and when he rose to go, and she gave him her hand, he dared to hold it a second longer than was necessary, and to feel that the touch conveyed a message to her heart. It is certain that she blushed, as he looked down at her, and that the blush made her a hundred times more bewitching to his heart and senses than before.

The magnificence of the grand hall that he crossed in leaving her, and the suggestions of great wealth that he saw on every

side, grated upon him, but, as he walked away from her presence, he was too blissfully in love for that to matter much. He felt perfectly certain, in spite of the odious idea suggested by his friend's coarse way of putting things, that the marriage had been a love-match; for it was absolutely impossible that the divinely good, and sweet, and modest creature from whom he had just parted, ever could have married from any motive but love. He even got up a sort of emotion of pity for the dead man, when he thought of what had been lost to him, and yet he felt any dealing of fate to be merciful, which opened to him the only chance of supreme and ideal happiness, which his life had ever offered.

He spent the next day with lawyers, absorbed in business affairs. In the evening he went to the theater, where he saw the woman he loved surrounded by a gay party. But she looked at him, as he passed, with a look that thrilled to his heart's core, and all through the play he was happy

in the sense that she thought of him, and even furtively watched him. Coming out, he met Tom Kennedy, who walked along the street with him, beginning at once to speak of Mrs. Etheridge. Hertford, with a certain reluctance, asked some question about Mr. Etheridge. He felt jealous of the man, and at the same time, sorry for him. He inquired how long he had been dead.

"O, three years, or such a matter. She 's only just come back into the gay world. No one can say she did not play her part with propriety. It was even more than could have been expected from a girl of twenty, to go into such long retirement for a husband four times her age."

"What!" said Hertford, in a low, contained voice, swerving a little in his gait, but otherwise apparently calm.

"O, he must have been well on to eighty, I should think," replied the other, "though his wretched old body was cosmetized and bolstered up with the utmost care to

the last. By the way — you saw him! Do n't you remember our laughing at the decrepit old dandy at the races that day when Hotspur won? — the old fellow who tried so hard to give a cheer, but could n't get up the voice, and who incessantly 'wrestled with his false teeth,' as I remember you put it? That was Etheridge. Do n't you remember him?"

"Yes," said Hertford, coldly, "I remember him distinctly."

A moment later, he had excused himself and returned to his hotel.

The next day, and the day after, he applied himself very closely to business, and was so successful in getting through with it, that he caught the same steamer on its return trip, and started back to St. Petersburg.

He had been gone a month, perhaps, when Mrs. Etheridge, who had been little seen by her friends, either in society, or at her own house, said abruptly one day to Tom Kennedy, to whom she had

not been at home once since Hertford's departure:

"Mr. Hertford once lived in New York—did he not?"

"O, yes—born and raised here," was the off-hand response.

"Do you know," she said, facing him unswervingly, though her cheeks reddened, "do you know whether he ever saw my—I mean Mr. Etheridge? Did he know him?"

"No—he never knew him, I 'm sure, but he saw him once at the races. I was reminding him of it the last evening I saw him. But why do you ask?"

"I merely wondered if they ever met," she answered, carelessly. "I never heard my husband speak of him." She said the word out boldly this time.

"No—I fancy not," said Kennedy. "They were not friends at all. In fact, Hertford had no idea he was the man you had married, until I told him."

Kennedy was a little dull, and he won-

dered now, why in the world she was interesting herself in such a trivial matter.

He had joined Mrs. Etheridge on the street, and he walked home with her. When they reached her handsome residence, and the doors were thrown open, she did not ask him to come in, but said good-bye rather abruptly. She crossed the magnificent hall and walked with a firm step up the grand staircase. Then, entering her own splendid apartment, she locked herself in and stood silent a few moments. Then she spoke aloud, safe from being heard in that lofty vastness.

"That was the man I could have loved," she said, "the man I do love! And I might have married him!"

In a second, she added, in a tone grown thick and indistinct with tears:

"And he loves me, too! I know he does—or did, until he knew!"

She stretched out her arms, with her hands clenched hard, and saw herself reflected from every side in splendidly-

framed mirrors, which gave back her image, from head to feet, in her elegant French costume. They showed her, too, the innumerable beauties of her luxurious rooms, hung with satin and carpeted with velvet.

She gave a cry of horror, and shut out the vision with her hands. Her birthright was gone, and this was her mess of pottage!

His Heart's Desire

His Heart's Desire

It was a beautiful country through which the Aroona River ran; so beautiful that at last, after ages of unmolested repose, a railroad had been built along the top of the mountain ridge, and tourists had begun to talk of its attractions. As yet, however, they knew the fertile little valley only from a distance. The point most admired by the passengers on those flying trains, was that where the Aroona lay beneath them, like a great tin funnel on its side. They could see it, in one place, broad and placid, and could follow distinctly its sharp and sudden compression into a passage forced between two great walls of rock, where it seethed and rushed through the contracted space representing the stem of the funnel. This was called

The Narrows, and below it was The Falls —a foaming cataract that dashed relentlessly over great, dangerous-looking rocks.

Perhaps the passing tourists sometimes wondered what sort of men and women they were, who lived in the odd, misshapen little houses, bunched together to form the tiny village, which was not much more than a dot on the landscape. It soon passed out of sight, and they thought of it no more, and yet it is likely that they were more concerned about these obscure country people, whose very isolation made them interesting to speculative minds, than the latter allowed themselves to be concerned about the occupants of the trains, which, twice a day, darted along the high horizon line, almost as swift and mysterious as meteors crossing the heavens. They were tranquil-minded, unimaginative people, and lived their lives and died their deaths in this distant valley of the earth, without much interest in what lay beyond.

On the outskirts of this village was a

house conspicuously superior to the rest. It was built on a slight elevation of land, and had some claim to ornament and architectural display. It was also supplied with comfortable outhouses and enclosed grounds.

Back of this house, beyond the commodious barn, was a little well-worn pathway, which led through the large vegetable garden down to what had once been an old dairy and spring-house. The spring was long since dried up, and the building would perhaps have fallen into disuse, had it not been that someone had taken possession of it and put it to a decidedly novel purpose. Almost one-half of it was occupied by a grand piano. Lying on top of this was a violin-case carefully closed, a lot of loose music, some bits of charcoal, some dilapidated paint-tubes, a very dirty palette, and other odds and ends of accumulated litter.

On the walls, and scattered all about in various stages of incompleteness, were sketches in oil, water-color, and charcoal,

all unmistakably bad, and yet with a quality in them that indicated that the mind had had something to express, in spite of the impotency of the hands. The room was dusty and disordered, and smelt strongly of tobacco, but the windows were open, and this odor was forced to give place, now and then, to the fresh, keen breath of the blooms of the honeysuckle vines, which hung in green density over the rickety porch without. There had been a heavy rain, and the wet sweetness was delicious.

The path through the old vegetable-garden had been carefully cleared at the important period known as "garden-making time," but now, in late summer, the weeds and grass had so encroached upon it as to make it almost as wet as the cabbage and potato patches on each side.

Down this path, stepping very cautiously, there came now a man and a child. The former was tall, thin, and much bent in figure. His hair and beard were scant

in quantity, and almost white. He had deep lines in his face, such as could only have been made there by age or sorrow. His features were without beauty, and quite unremarkable, except the eyes, which had a look that caught and fixed the attention. That look, one of earnest beseeching, was turned now upon the child, whose little hand was clasped in his great bony one, and who kept up with his shuffling stride by a little skipping motion, which bobbed her bright head up and down and seemed directly connected with the inarticulate murmurs which came from her lips, expressive of a totally irrelevant and irresponsible joyousness. Her little calico frock was neatly made, well-fitting and clean, while the clothing of the man looked, by contrast, almost piteously shabby and uncouth. His hair, too, was long, and straggled over his ears, meeting and mixing with his beard in confused disorder. The child was captivatingly pretty. Her nose was a queer little pug, her eyes

were enormously big and round. Her flesh was deliciously smooth, and her hair was curly gold, that, freely exposed to the sunlight, gave back shining for shining. She was not more than four or five years old, plump and chubby in figure, and seemed to give out an exuberant happiness, brighter than birds or butterflies.

As the path got lower down the hillside, the dampness of the undergrowth increased, so that the child's feet were in danger of getting wet. Noticing this fact, the man stooped and lifted her in his arms. Even this did not stop the sort of physical bubbling-over, which she had been keeping up, and she still dipped and nodded from her perch, and uttered her little gleeful gurgles, as if her heart had more joy than it could silently contain.

When they reached the gloomy little house, the man was very careful to close the door behind him, and his next action was to draw before the window the muslin curtains, which had once been white, but

were now dust-stained and weather-beaten. Then, with the air of old habit, he placed the child among the tumbled cushions of the sofa, saying, as he carefully felt first one foot, and then the other:

"Rose-Jewel must n't get her feet wet. Mamma would n't like that. No, they 're all right. And, now, must I tell you a story?"

The child shook her head in decided rejection of this idea, and said in an imperious voice:

"No, play."

He did not speak at once, but reached up and took the shapeless old hat from his head, and, with a sudden jerk, shook backward the thin locks which straggled over his forehead. There was unmistakable gratification in his face, as of one who had received a welcome invitation for which he had been too humble to look.

One would have thought it likely that the child, when she spoke, would call him "Grandpapa," but she turned her

insistent gaze upon him now and said peremptorily:

"Play, Papa, play!"

As he crossed over to where his violin-case lay, there had come a sudden buoyancy into his figure, and as he lifted the instrument carefully from its case and began to tune it, his face, too, was fervid and alert. The fact became evident now, that he was not an old man. There was all the strength of youth in the sudden motion with which he braced his shoulder to the violin, and all the fire of youth was in his eyes.

The child looked upward into his face, and smiled. He returned the smile, and with a bright nod of encouragement and promise, he broke into the gay movement of a little dance tune, played with extraordinary brilliancy of execution.

"How's that, baby? Here we go! Now the pretty lady is going down the line and holding up her pink silk dress. Listen to that! And now they are all catching hands

and whirling round and round, and everybody is laughing—and here goes the music like this!"

As he fiddled away at the merry tune, bending about, and jerking his head and elbows, the child got into a state of ecstatic glee, clapped her hands and laughed aloud, and finally slipped off the sofa, caught up her skirts, and began to dance. It was done with the tottering, uneven motion of a baby, but there was extraordinary vim in it, and as the music got every moment gayer and faster, she jumped and whirled about, until her companion, with a wild laugh of delight threw down violin and bow, and caught her up in his arms, covering her with kisses, and jumping about, himself, in rather a mad fashion, with the music in his blood, as well as hers. Then growing calmer he put her back upon her cushions, and taking up his violin, said soothingly:

"Now Rose-Jewel's tired, and Papa's going to make her rested. Sit still, dar-

ling, a little while, and see if you do n't feel as if you were in a lovely little cradle with soft blue ribbons on it, and a little bird singing on the window sill. Now listen for the little bird."

He drew the bow across the strings once, twice, with long minor tones, and then he began the bit of descriptive improvising. The child sank back in the cushions, and breathed a long sigh of ease. When the motion of the cradle was indicated, she rocked her little body slightly, from side to side, and closed her eyes luxuriously. Then, with his gaze fixed on her face, and with an intensity of fervid feeling that made him almost beautiful, the musician touched some short staccato notes that made a little cheeping sound, to which the child delightedly responded by saying:

"Birdie! Birdie! Birdie!" and made an infantine effort to snap her plump fingers.

The man's face grew radiant. Holding aside the violin in one hand and the bow in

the other, he took a few steps toward her, bent down, and kissed first one, and then the other of the soles of her little shoes, which were covered with fine grains of damp sand, that he felt against his lips.

"The good God gave you to me, Rose-Jewel," he said. "Put your hands together while I play Him a prayer of thanks."

Unquestioningly, the child placed her two hands palm to palm, and looked up reverently, as he began to play.

It was a strange, wild, sweet *Te Deum* that rose now and filled the little room. The very heart of praise was in it, the very soul of thankfulness. The man's dark eyes, for the time, had lost sight of the gift in the Giver, and were turned upward to the dingy ceiling, that was soon obscured by tears. The large drops rolled from his lids and ran down his cheeks. His face grew strained and seamed with agitation, and a thick sob rose in his throat. Still he played on with that rapt, uplifted gaze,

until a sound from the sofa recalled him, and he started, and lowered his bow-arm with a sudden movement of dismay.

There were tears in the eyes of Rose-Jewel, too, and her little heart, which he felt should know only the joy of praise, was tasting too soon its sorrow and solemnity. As one quick, sharp sob followed another he felt a sudden deep contrition stab him, and lifting his bow again, he began to play in a quieting, comforting, reassuring strain, interspersed with words that matched it.

"The dear God loves us both, Rose-Jewel," he said. "He wants us to be happy and bright, and not cry or get frightened. He sends us beautiful angels to take care of us, and make us go to sleep, and have sweet dreams. Listen to this now, and see if you don't hear them flying into the room."

The child ceased sobbing, and listened with earnest attentiveness, and by and by he had the joy of seeing her fall into a

gentle sleep. He played on, pleasing himself with the idea that his music represented to her, in her sleep, the dreams the angels brought.

At last, when she had sunk into a slumber too deep for dreams, and even the sobbing breaths of her scarcely spent emotion were stilled, he gently laid by his violin and came and sat down beside her. He placed himself, with extreme care not to disturb her, at the bottom of the sofa upon which she lay. His eyes lingered on her a moment, and then wandered around the room. The poor sketches on the walls, all so weak and ineffectual, looked back at him sadly, as it seemed to him, and the piano was another reproach.

This man — Hugh Eastin — had once thought that he would be a great musician, and many years of hard study had made him rather a distinguished one, within a limited field; but nothing had come of it. At the end of that time, in the impulsive way in which he did things, he had married,

and of that marriage he was the victim. He did not say so to himself; perhaps he did not even know it; but the paralysis which had fastened on his mind and soul was directly the result of his marriage. It would hardly have been possible for him to realize this, as he had enthusiastically agreed with all his friends that he was an extraordinarily fortunate man to win for a wife the pretty, virtuous, healthy, good-tempered young girl, who was known to be the heiress of the neighborhood from which she came. Her father had manifested the ambition he had for his only child, by sending her off to the city to be educated, and she had not graduated at school before the young musician, who gave lessons to the advanced pupils, had seen and fallen in love with her, and had obtained her consent, as well at that of her father, to their marriage. The engagement might have been sufficiently long to give them an opportunity to discover their unfitness for each other, had it not been that the girl's father died

very suddenly. It was then decided that, as she had no near relations to be responsible for her, she should be married at once. The wedding was therefore hastened, and he found himself, almost before he could realize the change in the current of his life, settled at the obscure country place, which his wife resolutely determined never to leave, and all his dreams of foreign study, and achievement in his art were suddenly in ashes.

It took him many a day to realize the inevitableness of his present environment, and when at last he looked it in the face, it bewildered him. He was married to a woman as severely practical in her ideas, and systematic in her life, as he was visionary and erratic. She was stronger than he, both in nature and character, and the habit of yielding to her had now become the absolute rule of his life. Very shortly after their marriage she had found his music an inconvenience, and although she had made no outward objec-

tion to the arrival of the grand piano, she had, when it suited her, accomplished its removal to the old outhouse, where no one could be disturbed by it. It was not so much the noise she minded, as the sight of useless hours and misdirected energies. On coming into her property she had shown herself a capable business woman, and she managed the large farming operations in connection with it with ability and success. It had never seemed to occur to her to commit these matters to her husband, and he felt it a deep relief that he was spared an effort which he knew would have ended in failure. Early in their married life he had suspected that his wife felt her marriage to have been a foolish one, and as time went on the certainty of this conviction settled upon him. But then came the children, and in them, without doubt, she was more than compensated for her disappointment in her husband.

She was a woman of great shrewdness, and her decision that her husband had no

capacity in him but music, once made, she ceased to expect anything but music from him. For herself, she had no respect for music as an art, and no perception of it as an enjoyment, and she did not scruple to say so. One day her husband heard her say to a friend, that she prayed every morning and evening of her life that she might never have a musical child. He never forgot that moment. It was not said to him, but she evidently had no objection to his hearing it. It was only an incidental remark, and the two women went on with the discussion of household affairs, from which it had been an off-shoot. As for Eastin, his heart-strings tightened, his breath came quick, his throat hurt him, and his eyeballs grew hot with the repression of tears. A sick terror seemed to take possession of him, and when he turned and walked to the window, his eyes seemed to look out on absolute despair.

For he, poor fellow, had been praying a prayer, too — the one consistent, fervid,

passionately persevered in prayer of his life. Night, and morning, and at noonday, whether on his knees or walking in the fields or wandering along the river banks, or oftener still, when he held his precious violin beneath his chin, that prayer arose with suddenly uplifted eyes to the great God whose power was infinite, and who could, if He would, give him his heart's desire — a child with the musical gift. He longed, too, that this child might have a nature and heart to comprehend and sympathize with his, though his wish he did not put into words. He felt absolutely sure that the greater would contain the less, and that if the music were there the sympathy could not lack. He knew his wife was right in holding that the musical faculty, alone, was a blessing to no one, and his hope was that this child might inherit from its mother the decision, industry and capableness that would complement the gift of music, which was the one thing of himself that he felt he could wish any child

of his to possess. He was acutely aware that his life was a failure — that he had lacked the capacity to put his musical power to any use. He had worked hard over it for years, and although people had praised and admired his music, no advancement or recognition amounting to anything had come of it. He knew that it was his own fault — he claimed no sympathy for himself and no merit. He wished that the child might have all the traits that he lacked, but he passionately wished, also, that it might have one thing that he possessed — this spirit of music, that was to him alternately a devil of despair and an angel of consolation. Surely, surely, if another being should possess an inward prompting such as his, something would come of it! Surely, no other creature who possessed it could be so handicapped by the impotent body and incapable mind, which he knew to be its accompaniment in him!

Dreams of that child were the theme of all his aspirations and imaginations,

and when, in the midst of some uplifting strain of music, he realized that it was absolutely a possibility — a thing that might simply and naturally come about, he would sometimes utter his soul in such sounds of harmony, that again would come the old haunting thought of composing some grand oratorio or opera, and he would begin desperately to try to get down on paper the music in his soul.

Sometimes the fit of exaltation and hope would last for hours, but it was enough to be brought for one moment into contact with the realities around him to stop it all. A summons to dinner would come, perhaps, and, if obeyed, the atmosphere produced by this change of scene was fatal. If he ventured to disregard such a summons, he felt the pall of coldness and disapproval hanging over him, and that feeling crippled him. It was a favorite remark of his wife, that considering how little she required or expected of him, she thought she had a right to

demand that he should be regular at meals, and should not counteract the lesson of punctuality which she tried to instil into her children. He felt the force of this, and stifled his complaints, living in dread of meal-time, and often prevented by this dread from making any progress at all.

When the heavy discouragement which came from his continually frustrated efforts settled down upon him, he grew moody and silent, and feeling that he was a drone in this busy household, he would seek the wide and unreproaching fields, or sit by the placid river bank, and content himself for hours imagining what would happen if the wonder-child he dreamed of should be born to him. His own life and career were utterly without hope, but now he could live again a better, fuller, freer life in this fresh young one, unhampered by inherent difficulties and self-made hindrances.

As time went on his life became daily more circumscribed and aimless. His

wife, with her usual shrewdness, had discovered that any effort to make a farmer and a man of business of him would be folly, and had long ago given it up. By degrees, she seemed to expect less and less of him, accepted the evident and inevitable, and ordered the life of her household in complete independence of him. She was a woman who felt it important to have the approval of her conscience and her neighbors, and both the one and the other acquitted her of blame concerning her duty as a wife. Sometimes people expressed wonder at her great patience with such a husband — a thing that she never encouraged them to say — but she felt that she deserved the tribute, and in this opinion her husband concurred. The task in life to which she set herself with the greatest fervor was to counteract in her children any tendency to resemble their father. So far, there had been slight indication of anything of the sort, and after having borne four little counterparts of herself in

dispositions and tastes, she had almost ceased to dread a reproduction of her husband.

In the same way Eastin had almost ceased to hope for that which she dreaded. In four instances had he gone through that agitating conjecture, and wonder, and hope, and fear, and hung eagerly upon every sign of baby intelligence that he saw. He would make occasions for taking the babies — the first, the second, the third, the fourth, consecutively — apart from every observer, and would hum or whistle different tunes to them, play furtively on a little music-box he had procured for the purpose, and even — when he could keep them long enough from their watchful mother's observation — try the effect of playing to them on his piano or violin, after having propped them safely on the sofa where he could watch every expression that crossed their little faces.

Few souls, the greatest and strongest, can have known deeper pain than that endured

by this starved and eager man, as the result of all these experiments. If by any chance an illusive look or smile led him to believe that for which he so thirsted was at last held to his lips, the disappointment which followed was only the keener. Each one of his children, boys and girls, had proved to be almost mysteriously like their mother. He used to wonder at this, and at times some bitterness mingled with the wonder in his gentle breast. Were they not his children, too? Why was it that, as if by instinct, each one of them would range itself with their mother, while he stood perpetually alone? The paternal instinct, at first so profoundly stirred in him, grew weak and meaningless, as the sure development of time would place the child by nature and instinct, and later by choice, with his wife and her other children.

In every instance, the children, beginning with indifference about music, grew to dislike it, encouraged by their mother, who always showed her approval when

this feeling was manifested. It was simple and explicable enough. The mother was a strong, compelling, intensely alive personality, whose importance and authority everyone recognized, while the father was gentle, deprecating and insignificant, and it was not hard for the intuition of childhood to discover that he was tolerated rather than approved. There were even occasions upon which they had heard him laughed at and turned into amiable ridicule.

Once, in the presence of the older children, some neighbors had come to make a visit, one of the number being so unusually experienced for that country as to have lived for a winter in the city where Eastin had met his wife. This woman, whose face and voice had a certain quality of sympathy which touched his heart, drew Eastin into conversation—a thing which scarcely any one ever took the trouble to do. She remembered to have heard him play at a concert with a very beautiful young girl, who had been compelled by

illness to stop in the midst of her performance. After reminding Eastin that she had been present at this concert, the visitor said suddenly:

"What became of that lovely girl who was taken ill that night?"

"Dead, darling," Eastin astonished her by saying, throwing into his answer all the plaintive tenderness aroused by the reminiscence, and not noticing the fact that he had applied a term of endearment to the decorous matron before him. He perhaps would never have realized it, if a suppressed titter, in which his own children took part, had not called his attention to the fact. Then he recollected himself, and a hot flush rose to his face. He got up and left the room, not in the least comforted by the fact, that, as he did so, he heard his wife rebuking the children for laughing at their father. It seemed to put him in such a miserable position that the rebuke should be necessary, and that his wife, in giving it, manifested a degree of

wifely dutifulness for which her friends gave her their admiration.

There were tears in his eyes as he took up his old slouch hat from the hall table and put it on, letting himself out into the sun-lit fields where the birds made their music without calling contempt upon themselves, and where nature seemed to hold out her arms to him and to invite him to repose upon the only breast which harbored no disapproval or criticism of him.

One thing which had bitten deep into Eastin's heart was shame at the lack of resolution and purpose, which had allowed him all these years to go on with this idle and aimless life. Once or twice he had made an effort to escape it, but those had been the occasions of the most painful and bitter scenes he had ever known. His idea of going forth into the world and making a career for himself with his music was the one thing his wife would not tolerate. She was afraid of what this break from his family might lead to, and she had

all a country-bred woman's horror of being pointed at as a deserted wife. It mattered little that her husband was separated from her in soul, compared to what it would be to have him separated from her visibly. It was pride — pride for her wifehood and motherhood — that made her feel so intensely on this subject, and she made no pretense of any more tender feeling.

If she had made it the appeal of love, even at this late hour, and had shown him that she wanted him to stay, because he was dear to her, he would have stayed and been happy. But his reason for staying was that when she told him that it was the one thing he could ever do for her or for her children — that neither had anything besides this to ask at his hands — her words, scathing and mortifying as they were, carried conviction, and he felt a moment's divine thrill in making the sacrifice.

Another motive which prompted him to stay was a natural and unconquerable self-distrust, which warned him unceasingly

that failure and disappointment were to be his lot in life. There was still a third motive — stronger, perhaps, than either of the others, and the one of all the three which he was most reluctant to own. This was a feeling deep in his soul, that a return to the conditions of life which he had once known would put him to a terrible test. His artistic temperament made him keenly susceptible to appeals to the senses, and during all these years his senses had been so starved that he was actually afraid to go willfully into places of temptation. A life of that sort would be infinitely more dangerous to him now than it had been before, for the reason that in youth he had always an ideal to live up to, and he had no ideal now. He had then been constrained to keep from self-abasement by the thought of bringing a clean body and soul to offer to the woman he would some day love. But the clear star of ideal love no longer shone for him, and the thought of what he might do if opportunity came

was a powerful restraint upon him. This, with the two other strong reasons, was sufficient to bind him to the spot of earth on which his wife and children lived.

He was not without a real attachment to his family, and he was proud of the two healthy boys and the two rosy-faced girls in a deprecating sort of way, which implied his knowledge that he deserved the least possible credit for them. But these were quiet, serious feelings, which had more the nature of opinions than emotions. He had been acutely disappointed to find almost immediately after his marriage that his wife was in no sense a companion to him, and he had since become convinced that any possibility of a companionship with his children was out of the question.

So all those prayers had been in vain! There was pain intolerable in the thought, but he did not cease to pray. His one hope of getting his prayer was the intensity of its earnestness. It was, therefore, a shock that stunned his very soul to hear his wife say

that she had been praying all the time that what he asked might be withheld. What more natural than that her prayers should have been granted, and his denied? She was a good and religious woman, who never omitted going to church or any religious duty. She was almost the support of the minister, and was generous in her gifts to missions and charities. He, poor old musician and dreamer, rarely saw the inside of a church, and when he did, he felt, as he said himself, like a poor relation admitted on sufferance. Often he played prayers on his violin, which he felt upbore his soul to God, and he sometimes passionately felt that if God would give him his heart's desire he would make the remainder of his life an act of praise and thanks to Him.

When his fifth child was born — a girl — he felt for the first time an apathetic hopelessness about it. Since he had known of his wife's daily prayer, his own seemed very useless.

His wife felt more satisfaction than regret in the fact that Eastin scarcely looked at this baby, and never voluntarily held nor, indeed, touched it. He had given evidence of no feeling against the little creature, and had shown himself, as ever, gentle and tender of the mother's weakness and pain, but there was a difference between his bearing toward this child and the others. The mother wondered a little why this was, but was far from suspecting the truth.

He showed the same indifference when the time came to choose a name for the baby. Heretofore, he had interested himself especially on this point. His wife had allowed him to call one of the girls "Adelina," rather liking the name, but had rebelled at "Wolfgang" and "Sebastian" for the boys. In this instance, being left quite free, she called the child "Rose-Jewel," the latter part being a family name of her own. When the

name was told to the father he gave it a listless approval.

Eastin had aged within the past year. The period marked by his wife's avowal to her friend had been the beginning of a change in him. His figure became bent and thin, his hair whitened, and he became more than ever indifferent about his dress. A dullness settled on him, also, that made him a sombre figure in that active household. Sometimes a consciousness of this oppressed him, and at times he would wish with a long sigh that life was over for him.

When Rose-Jewel was about a year old he happened one day to be in the room with her when she was taking her mid-day nap. The mother and other four children were out in the village. Walking across the room, he had had no consciousness of the baby's presence until a pretty little chuckling sound caused him to look toward the crib. There he saw behind the wooden railings a face that was ex-

quisitely sweet and merry, with cheeks rosy from sleep, and towzled golden hair, and a pair of beautiful great eyes that looked at him with love.

He stopped short, and his heart gave an excited leap. The child, of course, was familiar with the sight of him and was absolutely unafraid. He went a step nearer and bent forward over the crib. As he did so the baby smiled. It must be a hard heart that refuses to return the smile of a child, and Eastin's heart was soft as wax to any sign of love. The baby smiled again, and this time the smile was accompanied by a repetition of the little gurgling laugh. Eastin's face grew red, then pale, and he fell upon his knees beside the crib. A mighty impulse stirred his heart. It gave a great bound, as if it freed itself from cords that had held it in and from weights that had dragged it down. Words that leaped upward as if from its secret depths came in rapid whispers from his lips.

"Almighty God," he said, "great Lord

of all the earth, whose power is supreme, whose goodness to men is boundless, who gives to the ungrateful and unworthy as well as to the faithful and good! O great, and powerful, and merciful, and kind, and pitying God, give me in this child the desire of my heart! Give her the power to be what I have never been—the power to feed the hungry souls of men and women with the heavenly bread of music—the power to brighten their dark souls with its light—to ease their aching hearts with its divine consolations—to drown their restlessness in its peace! My God, my God," he pleaded, shaking back the straggling locks of hair, as he had been used to do when he became excited in playing, and shutting fast his eyes, while his hands were clasped on the railing of the crib with a hard pressure that strained the muscles into knobs, "the power is Thine—Thou canst! Thou canst! I do believe—in spite of all my faithlessness—I do believe! I know that Thou hearest! I know this

prayer of the poorest and most unworthy of Thy creatures goes straight to Thy infinite heart! O God, Thou hadst a Son! Thou art the Father of the Lord Jesus! In His name I ask! In the name of Him who said that those who came to Thee should in no wise be cast out!"

All the time that he was uttering these impassioned words the baby was looking at him in serene contemplation. Her little feet were bare, and she kicked them about and caught them in her hands, and wriggled her plump body from side to side, while she watched the strange motions of his head and eyes and lips as if it were an amusement got up for her benefit. As the last words were uttered, she laughed again—a little laugh that ended in a high, clear note that sent a thrill of ecstacy throughout the man's whole being. He trembled visibly and his face grew pale with the thick beating of his heart. For a moment he was absolutely still. Then,

for one instant, he raised his eyes, which were filled with tears, and his lips moved meekly. Then he looked down again at the child, bent his head over the crib, and began to whistle a low, sweet, stirring air. The little creature stopped at once her movements of hands and feet, and fixed her large eyes on him attentively. He whistled more gaily and quickly, and her face lighted up and answered with a look of excitement, which he saw with a bounding heart. Then he fell into a low, sad minor, slow and tremulous, and in a single moment her face responded. The smiles all vanished, and, as he went on, her eyes began to fill and she puckered up her little mouth to cry.

He sprang to his feet and seized her in his arms, clasping her against his throbbing breast, and letting his tears fall over her shining curls. He knew now beyond any possibility of doubt that she had, in one sense, at least, the gift he coveted for her—an emotional susceptibility to the

influence of sound. This was enough to make him feel that within his baby's body there was a soul to sympathize with him. He believed, moreover, and the thrilling conviction seemed to give wings to his soul, that his child would show herself to possess the gift of music in the creative sense. Perhaps the little body, warm and moist against him now, possessed within itself that august mystery, a magnificent human voice, or perhaps these exquisite baby hands, pink and dimpled and satin, smooth, were some day to command at will the grand harmonies of melodious sound. Ah, God! it was sweet to feel that she was his—bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh—body of his body—soul of his soul!

She struggled a little in his constraining embrace, and he loosed his clasp of her and took her more naturally on his arm and walked with her to an open window. It was summer-time, and a bird was singing in a tree outside. He saw her face

lighten as she heard the sound, and again his heart throbbed faster.

At that moment the negro nurse came into the room, and looked with astonishment at the picture that met her. The excitement through which the poor fellow had gone made him feel weak and tremulous, and he submitted quietly to have the child taken from him and carried away. His longing was to be alone, to utter in some way his thanks to the Father who had done this. In a few moments, almost unconscious of what he was doing, he found himself in his own little private place, the dairy. Here he shut himself in, and fell upon his knees. His prayer of thanksgiving was confused, incoherent, utterly insufficient. He rose in the midst of the mumbled words, took his violin, and began to play. It seemed to ease the stress of his soul, and as he played on, the tears overflowed his eyes. When he laid by the violin he went over to the piano and played great sounding chords.

A strain of grand melody came into his mind, and he found himself composing a *Te Deum*—fitting the words to the sound as they came to him, and feeling himself wrapped in with ecstacy.

That was the beginning of the new life to Eastin. After that, he walked about the common, familiar scenes, and saw them clothed with an unfamiliar beauty; he felt the world, no matter where he came into contact with it, sweet and harmonious and full of delight. He was absolutely, absorbingly and sufficingly happy. The common life about him seemed suddenly glorified, and his heart expanded with an overflow of loving good-will to all the world, that made him see in his wife and other children attractions and good points which he had never seen before, or it may be, caused him to imagine those which had no existence at all, except in his new-made will to see only goodness and sweetness everywhere. He made timid efforts to interest and to be of service to his wife and children, and

he was not perceptibly discouraged by the fact that his overtures were regarded with surprise, rather than appreciation, for he had in one little creature a refuge from every trouble, and a balm for every wound.

As time went on, Rose-Jewel showed every day new indications of a deep and extraordinary feeling for music, and occasionally, even in her babyhood, would pass from her high, clear laughter into a little carol of song, as spontaneous and incoherent as a bird's, and as thrillingly lovely. One moment, he felt himself weakened almost to helplessness by the sudden ebb of blood from his heart; the next, as it rushed back, he felt himself strengthened with such might that nothing seemed too great for him to do or to be. He soon became aware of a necessity for vigilance, in keeping his precious secret. His devotion to the baby, of course, was observed, and he was horribly afraid of having its cause understood. He felt that trouble for them

both would come of it. He knew how the mother would feel, and he had a deadly fear of being separated from his idol. He was relieved to find that his peculiar fancy for this baby was looked upon as a fad, for which his general oddness was enough to account. It was a matter of practical convenience to have so much of the care of the baby taken off the hands of the mother and the nurse, and so it was less commented on.

Perhaps it enhanced the delights of this companionship, that they were so often stolen. There was a delicious sense of mystery, in taking Rose-Jewel tenderly in his arms and walking off down the garden-path when nobody was looking, going into the little room, closing the door, drawing the curtain, and then, quite cut off from all the rest of the world, enjoying this most delightful of *tête-à-têtes*, where he played with absolute freedom and unreserve, to an audience that responded to his touch, whether light or hard, grave or

gay, more sensitively than the most perfect instrument could have done.

To look into Rose-Jewel's great delighted eyes, across his violin, and to see them gleam and glow with an emotion that corresponded absolutely to his, was, he thought, as keen a pleasure as he, or mortal man beside had ever known.

In time it became a positive, thrilling, marvelous certainty that Rose-Jewel had a voice — a clear, true, strong little voice that gave magnificent promise. Then came the other delight, when she was older, of teaching her to strike little melodies on the piano, and even to put her baby fingers on certain simple chords, as an accompaniment to her father's violin. The very first time he made this effort, she caught at it with a quickness and delight which made his breath come almost suffocatingly. It became, after that, a part of their daily routine, to practice together. She was old enough to talk coherently now, and he often feared that she might betray their

secret, but she seemed to have some wonderful intuition of the truth, and never even sang, except when alone with him.

What hours of stolen rapture the two culprits had together! Sometimes they wandered off and sat on the banks by the river-side, and sometimes he lifted her into the little boat, and, while she held the dear violin safely and reverently, he would row off into the stream, and there play to her while they drifted gently about. In this freedom of isolation he could play as it was impossible to play near the house, with an abandon of pleasure which set the child nearly wild with delight. Here, too, he would test and exercise her voice, with the greatest care not to strain it, and here, unseen by any eyes but those of the birds and the squirrels, they would put their arms around each other's neck and give way to a passion of tenderness of which both the child as well as the man, would have been incapable in the presence of others. They were completely happy hours—

happy enough to atone for every pain and deprivation which the past had held for him, or the future might have in store.

He did not complain of the past, any more than he feared the future for himself. His one thought was the child. When he speculated on her life to come, a timorous dread would, in spite of him, mix with the enthusiastic expectations of her dazzling success in the musical world. He would feast his imagination for hours, on the thought of this. It was not the splendor of music halls, nor the applause of audiences that he coveted for his darling. It was the power to touch the hearts of men and women, and to incite them to deeds of nobleness and strength, that should re-echo through the world.

Always, however, those dreams of bliss were poisoned by that haunting fear of what the counteracting influence of the child's mother might be. It made him shiver with terror, when he thought of that bird of music which lived in Rose-Jewel's

breast, with its wings cut, and its song stifled by the cold chill of disapproval, and even a more active form of objection. He imagined the harshness and contempt which would fall upon that angelic child, if it should be discovered that she had inherited her father's misfortune, and had been encouraged in its development by him. He thought of how broken and purposeless his life had been made by the cold and uncomprehending judgment of those about him, and he felt weak with cowardice at the thought of Rose-Jewel having the same ordeal before her. He was ashamed to feel himself powerless to help her in it. He knew that nothing short of stealing the child and keeping her hid would suffice, and that he could not do. All the world would consider him a monster, and he would feel like one. Besides this, his poverty would hinder. How could he take his little song-bird out to be a pauper with him? How could he even expect to keep such a voice as he foresaw in her,

a secret? No,—God help the poor baby! —she must stay and bear the blow when it should come, and he, for his part, must do what he could to help her—feeble as his help would be!

He felt the danger coming nearer every day, for Rose-Jewel was now able to sing little songs with words and music, and the more he felt the keen delight her delicious little voice gave him, the more he trembled at the thought of discovery. It was wonderful how the child seemed to feel the necessity of secrecy, and how, baby as she was, she never gave any evidence of her musical gifts, except when with her father. Her childlike recollection of his warnings surprised him.

One day the two were down in the old dairy together. Eastin, with his violin was playing the air of "Comin' through the Rye," and Rose-Jewel was following him, with her lisping utterance, and clear, delicious voice, as she stood before him, her eyes answering the look of his, as

definitely and truly as her voice answered his instrument. When he played the music to her baby pronunciation of the words:

"Every lathie hath her laddie,
None they thay have I—"

and her thrilling little voice rose to the last high note, and took it with ease and held it, the man's hand shook so that the bow dropped from it. For a few seconds, the only sound was that almost inhuman little treble voice, fine and thin as a hair, but so thrillingly sweet that it sent a long tremor all through Eastin's limbs. Hurriedly putting down his violin, he held out his arms. The child flew into them, and as he swooped her from the ground to his heart, she finished, without accompaniment, the lines:

"Yet all the ladth they thmile at me,
When comin' thro' the Rye."

He hugged her close and hard against his heart. He had in her all that he cared for, all that he had ever sought or desired,

his compensation for the bitter past, his sufficiency for the uncertain future. His heart was full of bliss.

A sound from behind aroused him. The door was suddenly thrown open. He turned, still clasping the child, and met the infuriated eyes of the wife and mother.

The scene that followed was one that roused him to a point of excitement he had never known before. It was very brief, but in those moments, in which Rose-Jewel clung about his neck, while her mother tried in vain to get possession of her, while she seemed to appeal to him for protection, and the very appeal seemed to give him the power of response, he felt himself, for the first time since his marriage, a strong, self-reliant man, and a sense of exultation swelled upward with the surgings of his excited blood, until he felt able to do and dare everything for the sake of defending this child. His wife, scarcely recognizing him in this unfamiliar aspect, was for a moment surprised into

silence, but the reaction after this made her more angry yet, and the long restrained indignation of years broke loose. She gave it full vent, and he heard his beloved art defamed and derided, and a possession of the musical gift called a misfortune, a nuisance and a curse. It was enough, she said, to have borne with it in him, and to have had calamity brought through him into her life; but to go through it again, with her own child—was more than she could stand! She declared that her confidence had been abused—that Rose-Jewel should never be left one moment alone with him again—that it should be the object of her life, henceforth, to suppress every sign of musical talent the child might manifest—that she was resolved to do this, if she had to whip her, tie her, starve her, lock her up, a dozen times a day. She looked into his eyes defiantly, and warned him that the child should not be spared! As he heard these words come from her lips, he felt a tight-

ening of the little arms around his neck. The fire of his passionate love for his baby was kindled into a keener flame, and he wished it were possible never to loose her from his arms. Her every second's absence from his sight would be torturing anxiety to his heart.

When the mother came nearer, and tried to take the little creature from him, he threw out his disengaged arm and warded her off, with a look in his eyes which she felt to be dangerous, and somehow, to her own surprise, it checked her. Rose-Jewel, terrified by the only half-comprehended threats of the mother, cried piteously on his neck, and even while to the excited woman before him he showed a spirit of daring, of which he knew he had never been capable until that minute, he was soothing and reassuring the child with soft, caressing sounds and touches, and inwardly vowing that, no matter what happened, he would never be separated from her — never give her up.

His wife saw that unknown look of resolution in his eyes, and felt compelled by it to yield her point.

She drew back a few steps, and after a moment's hesitation, said:

"I won't attempt to reason with a man who is out of his mind, for that is what you are, at present. Of course, if you choose to exercise force toward a woman, you are too strong for me. But, when I get my child back, I shall know how to keep her."

"She is my child, too," he answered, "and you shall never get her away from me. I will never give her up to you, or to any one."

These words were said more by way of reassurance to the sobbing child than to the mother. He had felt Rose-Jewel draw him closer, as she heard her mother's threat, and he answered the baby's touch, rather than the woman's words.

"You are too excited to see how foolish your words are," answered his wife coldly,

"but no one expects any practical sense from you. Rose-Jewel," she added, with a sudden tone of harsh authoritativeness, "if you do n't stop that crying, I shall punish you for it. I 'm going now, and your papa can keep you, but, to-night, you 'll have to come to me, and I 'll see if I can 't make you a better girl."

As the mother left the room, Eastin felt the child's sobbing increase. She uttered little stifled cries of terror that cut him to the very soul.

"There, my Rose, my Jewel, my Bird," he said. "Do n't you be frightened. No one shall take Papa's baby away from him. Papa 'll keep her, right in his arms, and never let her go out of them, that 's what he 'll do. Nobody shall lay their fingers on his baby."

He said recklessly anything that he thought would reassure her, but, even while he spoke, he felt oppressed and terrified at the impossibility of performing what he was promising. His heart felt like

lead, when he realized that he would *have* to give her up—that he would, in a few hours, now, at best, be forced to see her taken from him, struggling, crying, terrified, to begin her initiation into a life of torture, and that, when she left his arms, he could never take her back to them, in the same way, forever. All the privacy and sacredness of their intercourse was gone, even if, as was doubtful, he was ever allowed to have her again. And when she was out of his sight, what would be his dread about her? She had been threatened with blows, starvation, and revengeful anger, if she ever tried to play or sing again—and to stop her music would seem to him like murdering her soul.

A longing for the old isolation of freedom came upon him. They might have it once again! He reached for his violin and bow and put them into the case. Then, still holding the child pressed close against him, he took up the case with his free hand, and went out of the opened door.

It was a mild, overcast summer day. The very act of getting out of doors exhilarated and strengthened him. He spoke gay and encouraging words to the child, as he carried her down the little, well-worn path which led to the river, without going in sight of the house. They had often gone along this path together, and when he reached the bank and loosed the little boat tied there, and put Rose-Jewel down on the cushion in the bottom, with the violin against her feet, they were only re-enacting old familiar scenes of companionship and delight.

Eastin took up the small paddle that lay in the boat, and pushed out into the stream. The river was perfectly placid on days like this, and it was his delight to get off with the child a little way from land and to play to her. The boat scarcely moved upon the water, and they did not go out far enough to get into the current. It was in the wide and sleepy part of the stream above the narrows.

The child had grown completely quiet now, and looked up at him with a face of unclouded happiness as he laid down the paddle and took his violin out of its case. He put it in perfect tune, and then, with that radiant presence opposite him, began to play.

On his own heart the shadow of a great dread hung heavy. He felt that this hour separated the dear and beautiful past from a future full of pain and wrangling, and even of cruelty and harshness. He would have to make a desperate fight with his wife for the soul and body of the child, and he felt that everything was against him. It was inevitable that he should be conquered, and what would it all mean to his darling? He looked into her beautiful, confiding little face, and it almost broke his heart. He resolved that she should be happy, for this hour, at least.

He played to her gay dance music, and she clapped her hands in time to it, and rocked her little body about, until the boat

moved with her motion, and made them seem to be dancing. Eastin helped this effect by patting his foot and shaking his head, and answering audibly her little cries of glee. He passed from waltz to polka, and from polka to *galop*, the child, conforming to every change of time; and Eastin, remembering that it was their last free hour together, got intoxicated with the delight of it, and bewildered by the thought of its fleetingness played faster and faster, nodding his head in time to Rose-Jewel's motions, and never taking his eyes from her face.

At last, with a final scrape of the bow, the exciting measure ended, and he dropped his arms with a wild and breathless laugh, to which the child responded.

But how was it that, although both their tired bodies had grown still and relaxed, that sense of movement continued? Eastin felt a spasm of fear at his heart, and looking about him he discovered that they were far from the shore, and in the very

center of the stream, whose current was bearing them rapidly onward, and every moment becoming stronger and swifter. He realized, in one awful instant, that they had been drifting for some time, and were quickly getting into the narrows. He looked ahead and could see the high cliffs of rocks on either side, which, for unknown ages of time, had been the impregnable bounds of that crowding torrent of waves and spray and bubbling foam that rushed onward to the falls below.

He reached for the little paddle, but he felt it would be useless. Every moment the motion was becoming stronger and more irresistible. He scarcely felt the thin planks between him and the seething stream below. He put out the paddle, but one blow from that bounding water knocked it from his hand and hurled it away, and he could see it tossed from wave to wave with a sportive motion that seemed to mock him.

Suddenly a thought occurred to him, at

which his heart gave a great bound, and a light, as it had been from heaven, overspread his face. He knew that rescue was impossible, and the idea that God had planned for him and for Rose-Jewel this release from the pain of earth and this entrance into the glory of heaven swept over him with a wave of joy. There were no words that he had ever said more devoutly than, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," and he knew Rose-Jewel was already a companion for the angels. The vision of a certain ecstacy and bliss shone all around about him. O the freedom of it, the rapture, the music! Even the dread of physical death was nothing to him. Rose-Jewel would be his companion, and the journey would be short!

His one care was that the child should not be frightened. She had always answered to his control, and he took up the violin now and began to play.

"Listen, darling, listen!" he said, holding her eyes with his own, and drowning

in a flood of rich, keen melody the noise of the rushing water.

And Rose-Jewel answered to the insistence of those swelling sounds of music as unquestioningly as she had ever done. She forgot everything, as she bent forward to listen. He leaned close to her, that she might not lose one sound. The beauty of the music that swelled out over those turbulent waters was entrancing, even to himself. He did not know what he was playing—something he had never heard before, but something fit to play in those choirs of heaven to which he was going so quickly. He could not wonder that the child was under the spell of it. It came to him without one interruption —an unbroken strain of divinest sweetness, such as he had never heard before. In the very midst of it, the ever-narrowing, ever-quickening current gave the little boat such a wrench, that the violin was knocked out of his hand into the leaping waters.

Then Rose-Jewel gave a little cry, and turned to look about her, but before she had faced the sight of those terrifying waves, he caught her in his arms. She felt her little golden head drawn down upon its sweet, familiar resting-place, and the arms of her father folded close about her. Words of love and comfort and reassurance were whispered in her ear. She was being rocked into repose and rest quite naturally, as she had so often been before, upon her father's breast.

There was a sudden rush of something cold and strange — a swish of sound — a lurch — a fall — and then, still holding each other in the dear fondness of that close embrace, the musician and his little child sank together into death, and their spirits soared forth into infinite music.

The Masked Singer

The Masked Singer

The only objection which Edward Randall had to his new bachelor apartments was found in the fact, that they looked out upon some very dingy, dull, and gloomy houses opposite. This had been his chief obstacle in deciding to take these rooms, but there were advantages which soon proved a sufficient offset.

The fact that he was the only lodger in Mrs. Green's extremely well-ordered house, and that the elderly widow had a delicate feeling for his old china and other perishable property, and looked after the cleaning and arranging of his rooms, herself, was a great thing for him; and the fact, also, that his back windows looked out upon a beautiful little bit of old garden and a wealth of greenery made the other out-

look seem comparatively unimportant. He had the whole of Mrs. Green's second floor, and beyond the sitting room there was a pleasant, vine-screened porch supplied with hammocks and easy chairs, where, when the weather was mild, he could sit and smoke with his friends, or read or meditate, as the humor of the hour dictated.

He was not over thirty-five, and yet the fact was universally conceded that he was a confirmed bachelor—a matter of some regret to those of his friends who held that in that condition his good income, personal attractions, and lovable domestic qualities were more or less wasted.

The front view from his chambers being unpleasing to him, and the back view decidedly pleasing, he rarely drew aside the curtains of the former room, but one morning when he was rather idle, and also in a state of some uncertainty about the weather, he went to look out into the street to help him to decide whether or not

to go out before lunch. It was Sunday and rather cloudy, and it seemed to him that the shabby buildings opposite looked duller and dingier than ever, when his attention was caught by the opening of the door of the house directly facing him, and the appearance on the threshold of a young girl. She, too, it seemed, was in some uncertainty about the weather, for she came out on the steps and turned her face upwards to investigate the clouds. In this way, Randall was enabled to get a full and satisfactory view of this upturned face, which was very beautiful—so beautiful, in fact, that he felt the survey all too brief, and was conscious of a sense of strong protest when the girl, with an air of decision, shook out the folds of a thick blue veil and fastened it around her hat, then taking up her umbrella and a little book, which she had laid aside in order to pin on her veil, quickly descended the steps and walked away.

Randall watched her as far as he could,

and noted carefully every detail of her dress, which certainly bordered on shabbiness, and was poor and plain in material, and yet had for him a certain charm. It could only have been her figure and her movements which gave this impression, for, contrasted with some very smart young ladies who walked in front of her, she was an object dull and colorless enough. These young ladies had their faces frankly bared to observation, but Randall turned from them with distaste, to recall the pure young beauty of the face now closely screened behind that thick veil.

He wondered much about the young girl, for she was undoubtedly rarely beautiful, and there was an impression caught from her appearance which distinctly charmed him. The sight of the little book in her hand, together with the ringing of the church bells, assured him that she was on her way to church, and for the first time for a very long while, he felt like going to church, himself.

It was much too late to think of this, however, for his toilet was not begun, and so he turned back within the room, and lounging in dressing gown and slippers, spent an hour reading the morning papers and smoking. At the end of that time, he started up suddenly and began his toilet, with an air of haste and impatience. As soon as he was dressed, he took his hat and gloves and went down stairs. Just as he opened the front door, he caught sight of the young girl mounting the steps opposite, on her return home. She was in the act of taking off her veil, and Randall thought she did so with a certain air of relief from a bondage which irked her. Once more he got a brief impression of that young and exquisite face, and then, without having looked at him at all, she opened the door with a latch-key and entered the gloomy old house, and the dingy door closed behind her.

Randall went his way, and presently found himself seated at a beautifully ap-

pointed lunch table with a party of gay and brilliant people, among whom he was made very welcome, and where he laughed and chattered for an hour, but throughout it all he could not shake off the impression that this girl had made upon him, and her pure, young face, and plain, dark garments rose before his vision, as alien to this scene as the impression of some rapt, ascetic nun.

After lunch there was a general demand that Mr. Randall should play to them, and rather more obligingly than usual he yielded to the request, and, going to the piano, he began with certain powerful chords and impressive pauses, that soon compelled the company to perfect silence and attention. He was a fine musician, and quite accustomed to having his playing treated deferentially, but he did not often take the trouble to play to people as he was playing now. His audience had expected something light and brilliant, and instead of that it was only sacred music

that he played—harmonies and masses from the great masters of old, with an improvised arrangement and connection of his own.

He rose from the piano and said good-bye abruptly, hurrying away from the enthusiastic praise of his audience, and walking quickly back to his lodgings, where he spent the remainder of the day. Some men dropped in to see him, but either they were hurried, or they found him unamusing, for they presently went away, and at twilight he was left alone.

More than once, he had gone to look out on the opposite house, but the dull, gray front of that dismal structure was unsuggestive of the least hint of its radiant young inmate. When the lamps were lighted, at last, and the curtains drawn, and the servant, having attended to his comfort, had left him quite alone for the evening, he opened his piano and began to play. It must have been for hours that he sat there, with no music before him,

playing on and on, and thinking, thinking, thinking to those beautiful strains.

Of course, he did not fancy anything so absurd as that he was in love with this young girl, whose face and nearness so possessed him; that was out of the question. But what he did feel was that a quality in her face had roused to new being a certain ideal which had once held him, and which in recent years had been losing its hold.

Randall had an ardent and romantic nature, subdued by circumstance and rearing into conventional conformity. The passion of his life was music, and although he was a more or less earnest and successful lawyer, the hearing of good music and the cultivation of his own musical gift was the strongest interest of his life. His friends wondered that he had not married, and, to tell the truth, he wondered at that fact as much as they. If they were ignorant of his reason though, he, himself, was not. He knew well that it was be-

cause he had, so far in life, met no woman whose nature and personality made the appeal to him, and satisfied the desire of his soul, in the way that music appealed to and satisfied him, and what he wondered at was, that in all his wide acquaintance he had never seen this woman. He had grown tired of looking for her, at last, and had even deliberately considered the advisability of marrying a person who would have compelled a lowering of his ideal. A real, definite woman had been considered in this light, a woman with beauty, good breeding, position, and money, whom he thought he might win; but this woman not only was not musical herself, but she contradicted the ideal which seemed to go hand in hand with music in his soul.

No, certainly he was not in love with this opposite neighbor of his, but the remarkable effect which she had had upon him was to rouse in him the belief of the possibility of realizing this vanished ideal. There was something in her that seemed

to tell him that what he had dreamed of might still be. It was her face only that had done this. He had not seen the outline of her figure, for that had been concealed by a long black cloak, that was loose from neck to hem. And even more than this, he had not heard her voice. Randall had always conceived that his ideal woman would sing, though that was not a necessity with him, but he was so susceptible to the influence of sound that a coarse, or nasal, or discordant voice, even in speaking, would have killed the most fiery love that charm or beauty could arouse. He suddenly felt a great desire to know if this exquisite girl could sing, or to hear her speak. It was not so much an emotional stirring of love which she had aroused in him, as a sort of spirit of intellectual investigation. He knew that she had a face that might belong to his ideal woman, and he wondered if her voice would carry out the idea.

These thoughts absorbed him, while he

was playing, and he began to imagine plans by which he might hear her speak or sing. He could think of nothing, except to follow her to church some Sunday, and get a seat near her in the hope that she might join in the hymns, but the girl evidently went out alone and unprotected, and he could not quite get his consent to following and watching her.

Well, whoever she was, and whatever her nature and qualities, she had certainly managed to make a greater impression on the not very susceptible mind of Mr. Edward Randall, than that mind had received for many a long day. He went to sleep that night with a sense of newness and strangeness upon him, and he waked next morning with a distinct impression that some important change had come into his life. When he remembered what it was he smiled at himself; but all the same, the impression remained.

For several days Randall watched the house opposite, in the hope of seeing again

this charming girl; but it was in vain. Other people came and went, for the house was evidently let out to lodgers, but they were of the most uninteresting of the lodging-house class; indeed, as a rule, they were such people as it irked him to think of as living under the same roof with the lovely girl.

One afternoon, however, as he was going out he saw coming down the steps opposite a tall, slight figure in a long, black cloak, which he recognized at once, though this time the face was carefully veiled before coming into the street. This fact seemed a little singular, as it was getting on toward twilight of a mild spring day. He kept the tall figure well in sight, as he happened to be going the same way, and even crossed the street that he might observe her more directly. This fact put a wide space between them which even his rapid walking did not soon decrease, as the woman's figure moved very swiftly, and as if with some definite and important

object. When she came at last to one of the small public parks that relieved the sense of dense habitation of that part of the great city, Randall observed ahead of her a little gathering of people, mostly children, who had collected around an object which he at once recognized.

A cart and horse were drawn up to the sidewalk, and in this light wagon was a small, upright piano. The instrument was open, and a man with a small black mask concealing that part of the face which was not hidden by a black beard, sat on the stool before it, waiting. Randall had seen this sort of thing in London, but it was new to him here. It had no interest for him, however, and he would not have given the thing another thought had not the woman's figure, which he was watching, crossed directly over to this cart and the man before the piano recognized her with a gesture of satisfaction. He further saw her go straight to the side of the cart, where she paused a moment to take off her veil, revealing the

fact that she was masked, also. A close covering of black satin hid the upper part of her face, and a frill of black lace concealed the mouth and chin. The disguise was absolute, and he could have formed no idea of the appearance of the woman, had it not been for the vivid image stamped upon his memory.

He felt a sense of shock at seeing her placed in such a position — a girl with a face like that, a common street-singer! True, the face was hidden from view, but that air of concealment and mystery made it seem almost worse. He rebelled, evidently, too, against the thought of the man with his shabby clothes and unkempt beard. He had half a mind to turn and fly, but if she was going to sing he must hear her voice. If it should not match her face, he would be bitterly disappointed — but if, on the other hand, it should, how could he bear her being in such a situation as the present one?

As he saw the tall, slight figure mount

into the cart, Randall felt so really agitated over the issue ahead of him, that he sank upon one of the benches in the square and waited with intense interest for the music to begin. Some chords were struck upon the piano, introducing a brief prelude, which the masked man executed in a way that proved him, to Randall's cultivated ear, to be a well-trained pianist. But while the young man recognized this fact, he looked only at the woman. She wore above her mask a hat with a little brim, under which her hair was all concealed, and between this and the shape of the mask, which was so made as to stand a little out from the upper part of the face, he could not catch even a glimpse of her eyes. Randall had a swift mental vision of the loveliness, pureness, ideality of that hidden face, that stirred his heart with a vague sweetness, when suddenly upon this tender mood there fell a sound which made a discord in the harmony.

It was a woman's voice, singing a popu-

lar air in a manner so finished and correct that the method of it startled him with surprise and appreciation, even while the voice itself repelled him. He listened intently to every note. What was the matter with this voice? It was that of a thoroughly trained and practiced singer, and yet it seemed as if, in some way, it had been hurt. The low notes were hard and husky, the high notes were thin and weak. All of this might be accounted for by some disastrous illness or throat trouble, but even while he made this allowance, there was something in the quality, or character, or individuality of the voice, itself, even when singing the middle notes, which caused no strain, that stung the man who listened with a sharp pang of disappointment—a certain quality of hardness, even commonness, which was the direct contradiction of that fair and sensitive young face.

The selection ended, and Randall, drawing a deep breath, roused himself and

looked around upon the crowd which had gathered. They were a motley throng, composed of children, nurses, tramps, policemen, and aimless idlers of various classes. When Randall remembered the girl's face, his heart resented them all violently; when he thought of her voice, the tones of which still lingered in his ear, he did not care!

But the voice was beginning again, and again he turned and listened. This time it was Schubert's serenade that she sang, and her technique seemed to him absolutely perfect. Her voice, however, was colder, poorer, more expressionless than before, and he rose as it ended, with an impatient desire to get away. He could have stood any fault of method, had the voice itself been beautiful and sympathetic, but the voice distinctly antagonized him. Before he had moved from his place, however, he saw the woman getting out of the cart with a little basket in her hand, and he remembered that he was supposed to

pay for the feast of which he had just partaken. He sat down again, and waited for her to come to him.

As she drew nearer, and he heard the small coins clinking lightly in the basket, a feeling of what was almost disgust took possession of him. He saw looks of bold curiosity turned upon her from every side. He even heard certain comments, which, when he thought of the face upturned to the sky that Sunday morning, made him hot with indignation. When he recalled the voice, however, he was able to control himself.

As the singer approached him, he saw that her eyes, of which he sought eagerly to catch a glimpse, were uniformly cast down, so that even when the light fell so as to enable him to penetrate the shadows of the mask, he saw only a pair of lowered lids.

An idea struck him, and as she came toward him he took a silver dollar from his pocket and dropped it into the basket.

He hoped that the unusual size of the coin might cause her to look up, but it did not. She made a little gesture of acknowledgment, as she had done for the pennies and dimes already received, and walked swiftly on. Even the hand that held the basket was covered by a thick glove, which revealed nothing of its shape or character.

As she remounted to her place, handing the basket over to the man, who poured the contents into his pocket, Randall walked away. His pace quickened suddenly, as he heard behind him the voice that had so repelled him, singing with that beautiful method, which compelled admiration in spite of himself, the words and music of "After the Ball."

The effect of this experience upon Randall was to make him resolve to put his opposite neighbor completely out of his head, a thing he might have accomplished, but for a circumstance which occurred the very next morning.

The day was very mild and beautiful,

and his front windows had been left wide open by the maid who had done up his room. Randall went to one of them, and stood with the lace curtains shoved aside by his elbows, his hands resting lightly in his pockets. The people over the way seemed to be making the most of the spring sunshine also, for the windows were open all along, and in some cases, even the doors. The streets, still damp from yesterday's rainfall, were sending up a faint steam under the warm sunshine, and there seemed to be a perfect epidemic of pavement cleaning in progress. Servant maids with hose or brooms were working away vigorously, and the fresh young green on the budding branches rose above all this, as if the toilets of the trees had been completed before those of the pavements were begun.

Randall had determined to forget his neighbor with the beautiful face and unbeautiful voice, and in order that he might emphasize this resolution, he looked hard

at the door of her house, which happened to be one of those that stood open.

He could not penetrate far into the dark chasm of a hall which the opening revealed, but as he looked, out of the darkness there sprang a jet black object, which, as it bounded into the street, he saw to be a rather large black kitten. He knew from its precipitous rush that some one must be after it, and the some one proved to be the beautiful young girl.

If she had been beautiful before, with her long dark cloak and the severe little hat that hid both her head and her hair, what was she now, in a fresh pink cotton gown that revealed every curve of her slight and exquisite young figure, and her lovely face, surmounted by a rippling mass of bright gold-brown hair.

As Randall looked down on her through the budding green of the trees, she seemed of a piece with them, as if she might be the bloom that was the consummation of all their verdant leafage. Instinctively, he

stepped back behind the curtains, and concealing himself, carefully watched the scene that followed. The black kitten, evidently used to games of romps with its mistress, had scudded wildly down the steps and scrambled up into the veranda of the next house, where it sat complacently on the railing, to see what was to follow. The girl, with a look that was a compound of desperation and amusement, sat down on the steps, with the evident intention of coaxing the kitten to come to her.

"Minnie, Minnie, Minnie!" she said enticingly, holding out a lovely hand and making little curling gestures with the delicate fingers. At the sound of her voice, raised a little high, so as to reach the kitten, Randall started and caught his breath. It was musical, clear, refined, harmonious, the very complement of her face and figure! He had heard of such things, where some serious illness or injury had ruined a voice for singing, but

left its speaking quality untouched! Oh, why should she ever sing, he thought! And why should he ever have had the misfortune to hear her? All the time that he was thinking these thoughts, that vision of youthful loveliness was there before his eyes.

Her figure was charming, as she sat on the doorstep and continued to coax the kitten, in that beautiful voice of appeal; but it was more than charming, it was adorable, as she rose to her feet and, with stealthy motions of consummate grace, began to creep toward the kitten, which sat, with a wary pretense of unconsciousness, perched upon the railing. At last, when she was very near, and the kitten as still as a statue, she darted forward and had almost seized it, when with the agility of a squirrel, the little black creature, with one mad rush, sprang to the pavement, flew across the street, and scrambling up the rough trunk of an old wistaria vine, in a flutter of fun and excitement darted

through the open window, and jumped into Randall's room.

In an instant he captured it, and running down stairs and out of the front door bareheaded, he swiftly crossed the muddy street to the detriment of his patent leather boots, and gave the kitten into the hands of its young mistress, who stood spellbound on the pavement, in startled wonderment at this sudden prank of her pet.

It was a quiet street, and there was no one in sight except, at a little distance, the servants, who were so busy with their swishing and sweeping that apparently they had not observed the little scene.

Randall, as he stood there, in the sweet spring sunshine, face to face with this creature of his dreams and thoughts, took in every detail of her blooming loveliness, more rich than ever now, by reason of a brilliant blush which had come into her face. As she received the kitten from his hands she said a demure, "Thank you."

"Thank *you*," he answered, "for the opportunity of seeing such a feat. You could match your kitten with a squirrel, any day, and I 'm afraid your chance of holding on to it, in a city, is very small."

"O, I never let him get out!" she said with sudden anxiety. "He fooled me this time, but he shall not do it again," and as she spoke she gave the offender a sharp little slap, which so excited it, that with a sudden wrench it sprang from her arms and bounded away, she and Randall following in mad pursuit. Randall had once done notable running in a football team at college, and in the frantic spurt with which he darted after the kitten, his old training told, and he quickly overtook and captured it. When he turned and faced the kitten's mistress, both of them were flushed and laughing, and rather breathless.

"Oh, how kind you are! Oh, you little brute!" the girl exclaimed, addressing the man and the kitten in one breath. As she held out her hands to take the

struggling creature from him, he drew it back.

"No, I will take him as far as the door for you," he said. "He 's not in the least to be trusted, and would be off and away now, if he could. Poor little beast! I fancy it 's hard to be shut up in a close house all the time, and the chance of escape was too much."

"Yes, he misses the country so, and so do I! I ought to have pity on Tommy, for I 'd run from the city, too, if I could, and if I saw an open door."

They had reached the house now, and mounted the steps, side by side. He made her go inside and close the door, leaving just enough space for him to hand the wriggling Tommy through. As the little black object passed from his hands to hers, she looked up at him out of the gloom within, and said a fervent, "Thank you." Her glance was frank and simple as a child's, but, all the same, it sent him back across the street with a heart whose quick thump-

ing was not wholly due to the rather violent exercise which he had had.

Randall returned to the meditations of his own room more puzzled than ever; and if his interest in the girl of whom he had simply had a glimpse from afar, had been great before, what was it now that he had seen, in the glaring sunlight, only a pace or two away from him, the exquisite perfection of her loveliness, and had heard the refined and educated utterance of a voice which lingered in his ear as one of the very sweetest to which he had ever listened? Then, too, her impetuously expressed longing for the country, and hatred of the city, seemed a strange note to be struck by this being, whom with his own eyes he had seen as a common street musician, truckling to the vulgar taste of a crowd of loafers, and holding out her hands to receive their dirty pennies. As he recalled the scene, the memory of that strident, ineffectual, hard, discordant voice came to him, and he found himself in a state of tempestuous protest

against the whole thing. How could that fair, idyllic girl descend to the playing of such a part, and how could such singing go with such a face and figure? He had looked in vain for any signs of illness which might account for it. She seemed the emblem of eternal youth and health. Then came the memory of that look that she had flashed upon him from the gloom, and brought with it certain thoughts and aspirations, which had not been stirred within him for long and saddened years.

The Sunday after the episode with the kitten, Randall came out of his lodgings at a little before eleven o'clock, and saw across the street, just ahead of him, the well-known figure in the long black cloak, with the close veil around the face. He had watched the opposite house for days, but had not caught a glimpse of this figure. Other lodgers came and went (for the house seemed a crowded one), but not the one he sought. He had started out rather aimlessly this morning, and he saw no

reason why, in taking his airing, he should not keep the graceful figure ahead of him in view, particularly as he, himself, could not have been observed by her. So, for a long distance he walked after her on the other side of the street, until at last she turned and joined the straggling stream of people that seemed setting toward a small new church — one of the little mission places so common now in our great cities. Randall quoted to himself the lines:

"She went to a cheap, cheap church
That stood in a back, back street,"

and smiled at the thought of the new complicatedness of the aspect of things. And when she joined the crowd and entered, a sudden wish to go to church himself came over him, and he saw no reason why he should not indulge it. He did so accordingly, and being told that the seats were all free, he presently found himself placed a little behind the young girl, so that he could have a distinct view of her profile during the entire service. He was secure

in the consciousness that he had not been observed, and his presence, therefore, could cause her no annoyance. He watched her furtively as she sank upon her knees, burying her veiled face in two exquisite little shabbily-gloved hands, and remained for some moments in silent prayer. What a wretch of a creature he suddenly felt himself to be, and what a yearning he had to ask her to pray for him!

When she got up presently and took her seat, his heart quickened to see her raise her hand to unfasten her veil. How odd it appeared that no one else seemed to be noticing or caring! The congregation was composed chiefly of people with stolid faces and rather dull expressions, and Randall was further surprised to see that no one manifested any interest when this beautiful young face was exposed to view. He had occasion, however, to congratulate himself upon this indifference, since it extended to himself, as well, and left him free to look toward his lovely neighbor very

often. He had to admit that she was as unconscious of the rest of the congregation as he, though no one else that he could see betrayed such absorbed consciousness of the effect of the service. It was a high-church service, and this young girl went through all the rather elaborate forms with an intense devotion and absorption, that for some unknown reason almost made him feel resentful.

The more Randall looked at her, the more lovely and lovable did she appear. It was quite, quite the most beautiful face that he had ever seen, he decided, and his heart was somehow more attuned to worship to-day than he had felt it for many a year.

At last, a hymn was given out, and the congregation rose. Randall jumped up rather suddenly with a positive instinct of flight. He did not want to hear her sing. He could not bear to stand so near and see those most lovely lips part and send forth such a voice as he knew, alas, must

issue from them! But while he hesitated, the music began, and the sweet lips remained closed and immovable, except for a little tremor which he fancied he saw, as the girl's eyes followed the words in her book.

When the hymn ended, and the congregation knelt, he saw the young girl hide her face in her handkerchief for a moment, and then, quickly take up her thick veil and pin it on securely.

He let her go ahead of him on leaving the church, as he did not wish to be observed. He did not follow her home, however, but went instead to the club, and joined a group of chattering men in a bay-window, and listened for half an hour to their vapid comments on the smartly-dressed men and women who went by, feeling all the time a dull ache in his heart for that sensitive, lonely, probably unhappy girl, whose loveliness, even in her shabby clothes in that little mission chapel, made the most fashionable of the women who

passed him seem trivial and vulgar by comparison.

For several days, Randall carried this lovely vision in his mind, until one afternoon, in a populous business neighborhood, he came suddenly upon a group of people assembled around the familiar horse and cart and the pair of musicians. He wanted to retreat, but he forced himself to stop and join the crowd, wondering what effect his presence would have upon her, if she should see and recognize him. So he took his place conspicuously, and listened with indignant protest as she sang, in popular style, with a vulgar abandon that made him positively furious, the familiar strains of "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay!"

The voice was grating and unlovely as before, but again he felt amazed at the marvelous method of the singer, and the spirit with which she gave the song called forth an encore, after which she got out of the cart and passed around the basket. When she came to Randall, he purposely

fumbled several seconds with his change, hoping that she might look up at him, but when she persistently looked down, he fancied that if she saw him, she was ashamed to reveal herself to him. Well she might be, he thought, and tossing some loose coins into the basket, he was about to walk away, when he heard a man standing near say some words to the woman as she held out her basket to him, which roused such fury in Randall's soul, that before the insult had died upon the fellow's lips, he found himself seized by the shoulders, and hurled aside with a blow from so powerful an arm that it sent him staggering against a tree. At the same instant, Randall saw the woman, with a movement of fright, run swiftly toward the cart. Before she reached the cart, however, the man at the piano had sprung from his place, and had rushed after the fellow whose words had caused the disturbance, but who, warned by the punishment which he had already received, had

made the best use of his time and had escaped. Seeing this, the pianist turned and, coming toward Randall, said in a voice of controlled agitation, "I am very much obliged to you, sir, for what you did."

Randall, who was in a state of disgust at the whole performance, waved aside the man's thanks, and rapidly walked away.

During the weeks that followed, Randall was a prey to conflicting impressions, that kept him in a continual state of excitement and restlessness. He had got up an interest in the working of the mission chapel, and the evident help which it gave to those poor working people, and it pleased him to find a really satisfactory object for the expenditure of some of his spare cash, so he went to church every Sunday there, and contributed liberally to the work. He did not deceive himself as to the prime object of his attendance. He knew it was because his beautiful neighbor went there, but his interest in the work

was sincere. He had more than once encountered the young girl in coming and going from the church, and upon these occasions it was his habit to lift his hat and to bow respectfully, just as it was her habit to return this greeting by a brilliant and beautifying blush. It made her adorably lovely, and as she now habitually removed her veil before entering the church, and did not replace it until after leaving, he had the full benefit of it. If he chanced to meet her on the street away from the church, she was always closely veiled, but usually he managed to bow to her, as she was entering or leaving.

But if the experiences of his Sundays gave him pleasure, it was more than counterbalanced by the pain he felt in the experiences of his week days. Try as he might to avoid the humiliating spectacle (and he did make a great effort) he was liable at any turn to run against that rusty cart, sleepy old pony, and the pair of musicians. He had had a sort of hope that the

experience with the brute who had insulted the girl would stop these performances for the future, but he found that they went on just the same as ever. He could only conclude from this, that the man who performed with her was oblivious of, or indifferent to, her need of protection.

Randall did not always sit near her in church. Sometimes he even forced himself to take a seat where he could not look at her at all, but it was something to him to feel her nearness. One Sunday, however, he thought he had won the right to treat himself to an unusual indulgence of proximity, so on entering the church, after she had taken her usual place, he quietly walked into the seat on a line with her, and took his place near the end, where he was only separated from her by the partition dividing the pews. Never in his life had his manner been more quiet and composed, than as he sat there, profoundly still, with his eyes fixed attentively upon the preacher. He knew that she had recog-

nized him, and he was perfectly confident that she blushed, but no one observing him would have seen in his manner anything but the coldest composure. It was, none the less, a very sweet consciousness to sit there quietly, close by her side, and he half fancied it was also pleasure to her. During the sermon he was acutely aware of her, and of every slightest movement that she had made in shifting her position, or moving her feet upon the footstool. And once, only once, he heard her breathe a little sigh, the sound of which stirred him to tenderness.

After the sermon the hymn was given out, and it proved to be the one that had been sung on the occasion of his first coming here. When the young girl rose with the open book in her hand, she observed that he had no book, and with a movement at once frank and timid she offered him hers, glancing up at him as she did so. He shook his head, declining to deprive her of it, but at the same time he

caught hold of its extreme corner nearest him and continued to hold it so, until she saw his meaning, and took hold of the opposite corner. Then in a carefully modulated and sympathetic voice, which had great sweetness and charm without remarkable power, he began to sing. Admiring women had been touched by his voice before to-day, and it was no wonder if it touched with power the woman standing at his side. He hoped it did, at least, but he could divine nothing, as her little shabby thumb supported the book unwaveringly until the hymn was ended.

Walking homeward that day, Randall looked his present condition in the face more boldly and honestly than he had ever done before, and the result of it was that he owned that he was in love.

Having made this acknowledgment to himself, that he was really in love, he faced the possible consequences squarely also, and he came to the conclusion that his only safety was in flight. As for mar-

rying a street singer, whom he had seen insulted by a common rough, and who had a voice as rasping to him as a peacock's, he might be more or less of a fool in his love of having his own way, but he was not such a fool as that!

The contradicting facts, that she was as beautiful as a dream, and had, as he believed, a nature both exalted and refined — did not by any means seem to him a sufficient compensation, and he made up his mind to go abroad for several months, and to come back with this little episode quite eradicated from his mind.

He carried out his plan so far as the trip was concerned, and even as to its results he felt that he had been fairly successful. Certainly the absurdity of having fallen in love with a street singer with an abominable voice was sufficiently clear to him, and change of scene and absence had done their work in weakening the spell which this girl had laid upon him. In spite of all this, however,

he was not sufficiently self-secure to run any risks. He would not have dared to go to church, and he had made up his mind to look out for new lodgings immediately, and until these should be secured, not to go to the front windows.

These resolutions he religiously kept. He had taken no vow, however, not to look toward the opposite house in going up and down the street, and this he always did, half hoping and half fearing to see that lovely vision in rose color, who still remained the most beautiful picture in the world to his mind. He never caught a glimpse of her, however, and so far had seen and heard nothing of the street singers, a thing which, of course, might be accounted for by the fact that the cool weather of autumn had set in, and there was no chance of drawing a crowd in the streets to listen to singing of that sort.

During his trip abroad Randall had given himself a perfect feast of music. Convinced more strongly than ever that

"love's young dream" was not for him, he was determined to make the most of the next best thing, and to fill his soul with music. To lose the opportunities which Europe offered him for this had been his greatest regret in coming home, and after indulgence in the very richest forms of musical delight he felt more or less impatient of the concerts and recitals of which he read in the columns of the home newspapers.

One afternoon at his club, he heard some men discussing a concert which was to take place that evening, and they suggested to him to go. It seemed that Mensenn, a well-known manager, had discovered a wonderful new voice, possessed by a young girl living in the city. Only the name of Mensenn would have drawn Randall into a thing like this, and even with that important recommendation of the new singer he felt dubious and half-reluctant, but that evening, having nothing better to do, and having within him a great thirst for music,

he went to the great concert hall to see what he could do, to satisfy it.

It was rather a surprise to him that Mensenn had ventured on the biggest hall in the city for the launching of this *débutante* and yet he reflected that Mensenn was a man who generally knew what he was about.

Randall was a somewhat erratic and unaccountable fellow, careful and economical about money on certain lines, and recklessly prodigal in others. Where the indulgence of his love for music was concerned, he never counted it, and this evening, after reading the programme and seeing several favorites among the selections, he felt inclined to do his very utmost to get pleasure out of this concert by hearing it under the best conditions that he could secure. The chief of these was either sympathetic companionship, or solitude, and as he could not command the first, he would the latter, so he got a small curtained box in good sight and

sound of the stage, and took his place in it alone.

The concert opened with a very good performance of violin and violoncello, with piano accompaniment. The players were not great artists, but Randall got enough out of it to stir the deep, emotional feelings within, that made him simply yearn and hunger for more — more music and sweeter, more life and fuller! The next performance was to introduce the new singer, Miss Bianca May.

He sat quite screened from view behind his curtain, and waited with mingled hope and doubting for her to come out. And now she appeared, Mensenn leading her. She was tall, she was dressed in white, she was supremely beautiful. His heart gave a great leap; the blood seemed to surge forward in his veins, and then to rush back in a way that gave him a sense of suffocation. She was walking forward with a step and a carriage that he recognized. She was looking around the house with

great, pure, innocent and timid eyes that he had looked into before! She was his opposite neighbor — Tommy's little mistress!

Her beauty was positively enthralling, but oh, her voice! At the thought of that, he turned cold with dread, and then hot with angry protest. What *did* Mensenn mean? How *could* he let her adorn her loveliness like this, to be led as a victim to the sacrifice? He knew the character of the audience assembled, and he knew that they were not people to be inveigled into the toleration of such a voice by mere beauty. The very fact that she had such a beautiful and correct method would make the thing all the more an insult to their intelligence. He was almost beside himself with anger and mortification. He longed passionately to rush upon the stage and drag her away, and to hide her beautiful, unconscious face against his heart, before she had come to feel the contempt and indignation which the audience, now spell-

bound by her beauty, would very soon have ready for her.

Across the wild confusion of these frantic, angry thoughts a sound fell, a sound so sweet, so powerful, so exquisite, that it was like the voice of peace, speaking with a strong, commanding influence to his soul. It was a voice that satisfied, for the first time in his life, the utmost ideal of Randall's soul! Not only was it the perfect method that he knew, but the voice, itself, was so gloriously exquisite, so fine, so clear, so passionately sweet, that his soul was wrapt in ecstacy. It was almost too cruelly sweet. Randall shuddered, and, when the song ended, he dropped his face in his hands and gave a sort of sob.

Then there came from the audience an absolute storm of applause. So tempestuous and excited was it, that the girl was evidently divided between pleasure and fright, and when Mensenn came to her and led her from the stage, she was so

visibly shaken that she could not, at once, respond to the encore. It seemed to Randall cruel—it made him madly indignant that they should make this demand upon her, and while the clapping and calling was at its height, he left his box, and made his way into the street.

For an hour or more he walked about trying to secure some degree of calmness, and to solve this inscrutable mystery. What was the secret of this miraculous change of voice? Had it all been a clever imitation of inferiority and discordant sound that she had practiced behind her mask? How could it be possible to so disguise the voice of a lark or of an angel such as this? And what could have been the object? Whatever it was, the creature who had long ago won his love, and who had now by the possession of this voice deepened that love to adoration, was the woman he must have for his wife, if work of man and prayers to heaven could accomplish it! The fact that she

had been a masked street singer, the uncertain quantity of her relation toward the man who had played with her in that character,—all these things vanished, and Randall was possessed by the headlong wish, which dominated everything else, of getting access to her immediately, and begging her to become his wife.

He made his way back at last to the concert hall, and found the audience just dispersing. He had not wished to hear her sing again; he felt that it would be more than he could bear, but he had a definite purpose in view as he made his way to the rear of the stage. Here he met several men whom he knew, coming away.

"It 's no use, my boy!" said one of these. "Old Mensenn is immovable. He not only will not introduce us, but he refuses, for the present, to answer any questions. Perhaps he 's wise, for after such an ovation as this, if she showed up, she 'd run the risk of being eaten alive.

The women are as mad over her as the men." Randall hurried on, however, and catching sight of the well-known face of old Mensenn, approached him with a certain confidence. The man had known him long, and, as Randall hoped, in a way that had made him trust him. Every effort which he made was perfectly useless, however. It was evident that no exception to his decision was to be made.

Randall was turning away half-resentfully when a man, small and unremarkable in appearance, came from a long, dark passage and, seeing him, stopped a second, and then, as if recognizing him, approached rapidly and said:

"You do not know me, but you rendered me and mine a service once, which I can never forget. You are the man who punished the brute who offered an insult to the being dearest to me in the world. I saw you from behind my mask, and have often wished that I could thank you properly for what you did. Will you call to

see me to-morrow afternoon at four, and let me introduce you to my daughter that she may thank you, too?" And while Randall stood astonished and delighted, the man gave the address of the house opposite his own, and then walked away.

Randall, on his way home, felt, in spite of his joy at this stroke of fortune, as puzzled and confused in mind as ever. It was an untold relief to learn that the man with whom the woman he loved had sung in the public streets was her father, but oh, how could he have let her do it? What sort of a father could he be? And yet his somewhat pathetic face had beamed with tenderness during the few seconds in which he had spoken to him. Well, one great burden had been rolled away from his heart by the discovery of this relationship between the street singer and her companion; another had gone with the discovery that that awful sound of discord was not her natural voice; and the one that still remained, the fact that she

had been a masked street singer, lay heavy on his heart still, but contrasted with the love he had for this woman, that burden he was more than ready to carry.

The next afternoon at precisely four, he rang at the door of the opposite house, and asked for Mr. May. The servant led him up several flights of stairs to the very top of the house, and then along a dark passage leading to the back building, and here she knocked at a door, and then turned and left him. A man's voice called "Come in!" and Randall opened the door and saw his new acquaintance sitting at a table writing, and at his side his old acquaintance seated on a low chair engaged in stroking Tommy, who was greatly grown. He did not see the kitten at first, because of the fact that the young girl was dressed in deep, intense black, which swathed her to her throat and wrists. It made the brilliant loveliness of her face, however, all the more startling, as she rose to her feet, still holding Tommy, and recognized him

with her usual tribute of a rosy blush. His appearance was evidently a surprise to her, though it soon became evident that her father had prepared her for the reception of a stranger, and had told her to what cause the visit was due.

The father, himself, a somewhat feeble and timid man, explained that they were in the shadow of a recent bereavement, his wife, and the girl's mother, having died only a month or so ago. He alluded to it in a low and sorrowful voice, and ended with the words:

"You can understand, therefore, all the more, why I should have wished for the opportunity of thanking you for resenting the affront that was offered to her, by that brute, when she was exposing herself, for the sake of our child, to the dangers which such a position made inevitable. It was all that our dear daughter might be nurtured in refined and wholesome conditions, for the preservation of her health and her innocence, and the development of her voice,

which has fulfilled, at last, all our hopes concerning it, when the dear mother, who so passionately loved her has passed beyond the knowledge of it."

"Do n't say so, Father," said the young girl, gently. "I felt her very near to me, last night. It was that thought which kept me up and enabled me to sing my best."

As she spoke, she drew a little nearer to him, and putting Tommy on the floor, she took her father's hand in hers and held it, while he talked to their visitor, and told his story, in a simple, frank, unworldly way that very soon put Randall in possession of the whole situation. It was made very clear to him that the mother had been the master spirit of this trio, and that this mild and ineffectual little man was very helpless without her. His lack of worldly prudence showed plainly enough in the fact that he took this stranger so fully into his confidence on the sole ground that he had once defended his dead wife from an insult. The girl, herself, too, seemed

to find nothing strange in the situation, as she sat by and listened to her father's recital of his wife's labor of love and sacrifices.

She had once possessed a superb voice, herself, it seemed, and had received the most perfect and thorough training in a great European *conservatoire*, being herself an Italian, but before she had sung in public at all, a severe attack of throat trouble had ruined her voice forever, and she had come to America to give lessons, and in a southern town had met and married her husband. Then had begun a long life of vicissitudes of various kinds, culminating in the street-singing performances, a necessity to which they had been reduced, at last, by positive want. In this way she had eked out the little that she could make by taking pupils at a small price, and by the little jobs of writing and bookkeeping which the man himself could get, until the time should be ripe for her daughter's *début*.

All this was told to Randall with the utmost simplicity, and Bianca, herself, sitting by, seemed pleased that he should know it. When at last he rose to go, it was like the parting of friends, and he asked and received permission to come again. He longed almost intolerably to ask her now, to-day, to be his wife, and he chafed under the necessity of delay.

And the delay, in point of fact, was not very long. When hearts are young and trusting, why should it be? And Bianca had had an instinct of blind trust in him from the first. He got Mensenn to say a good word for him; he cultivated the father and took pains to make him acquainted with the details of his life, position and circumstances; and then, at last, he felt that he had only Bianca's consent to win.

How would she answer him? How did she feel toward him? He asked himself these questions with agitated hope and fear. Her very friendliness and frankness half frightened him at times.

One afternoon when he went to call, as he did almost daily now, he found Bianca in the little sitting-room alone. It was the first time it had happened so, and she explained her father's absence, and that he might be in at any moment. The situation was a little constrained for her, and Randall saw it, and to reassure her he asked her to sing. She had done this frequently before, but always with her father to play her accompaniments. He volunteered to do this now, himself, and sitting down to the piano he struck the opening chords of the song he had first heard her sing. The song which had been the consummation of her revelation to him. She began to sing it. They were alone together. The song was more than speech. He turned his head and looked upward at her. His look agitated her, and her voice faltered. At this he smiled, and the voice grew more unsteady. Then suddenly he stopped playing, and without the support of the accompaniment, she broke down utterly.

But the hands that were lifted from the keys suddenly took both of hers in an imperious grasp. The gaze that she tried desperately to avoid, compelled her to look at him, and after the confession of that look she knew no more, but that she was in his arms, and was glad and satisfied.

The Story of an Old Soul

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All things considered, it was not strange that Clement Rhodes should have looked back upon his one year of marriage as a mere episode in his experience. His had been a life of more or less excited and turbulent episodes, all through, and perhaps that one — his marriage with an ignorant and pretty school-girl — was now among the vaguest of all the emotional impressions which were stamped upon his brain.

He had been nearer to fifty than forty, and a conventional type of old beau, when he had chanced to be thrown familiarly into the society of this young girl. Young girls were somewhat rare in his experience, for the reason that all such who had any one to look out for them, were protected from the dangers of any-

thing more than a very casual acquaintance with him. He was permitted to take them in to dinner, to dance with them, or to pay them any passing attention when they were fully chaperoned, but there the line was drawn.

It was an unusual experience for him, therefore, when, during a visit to some friends in the country, he found himself frequently *tête-à-tête* with a girl of eighteen, who had as little idea of protecting herself from a man like him, as her hostess had of protecting her. The fact was that this hostess had frankly declared to him her wish that he should marry this girl, saying that she was both too poor and too pretty to look out for herself.

The idea, when first presented to Rhodes, seemed absurd in the extreme, for he was poor also, and lived in a hand-to-mouth fashion, which he had known better than to ask any woman to share. He had never entertained the possibility of marrying any but a rich woman, and now,

as he had grown older, and his shiftless habits were more fixed upon him, he had begun to realize that his chance of doing this was very small. The idea of marrying a penniless girl, however, was more preposterous still, and it was therefore a great surprise to him when he found himself committed to this marriage.

It had come about simply enough. He was a thoroughly initiated old flirt, and when he had tried some of his wiles upon this *ingénue*, and she had responded by an innocent revelation of her love for him, there proved to be one note in him sufficiently finely attuned to compel him to act honorably by this young girl who had trusted him. Without stopping to consider how it would hamper him for the future, he married her, and took her to as comfortable a little set of rooms as he could manage to secure.

He was in love with her, of course. Falling in love was one of the most facile of feats to Rhodes, and falling out was

about as easy. Heretofore, dancers and comic-opera singers had been the most frequent objects of his worn-out affections, and the present contrast to all this had undoubtedly something piquant in it.

After a few months, however, the prosaic demands of the monotonous home life in the little suburban roost, where his friends never came, grew very wearing, particularly as his wife was delicate, and indisposed to join him in his trips to the theatres and concert-halls, which had become a confirmed habit of his life. She did not wish to confine him at home, however, and she insisted that he should go without her, so that gradually he found himself slipping back into his bachelor ways.

It was very welcome to Rhodes about this time to have any means of drowning care, for he was badgered about debts and expenses, finding it more than he could do to keep going even that poor establishment. He had a desultory occupation as an insur-

ance agent, by which he picked up a little money now and then; but younger and more industrious men were fast pushing him aside, and his income diminished as his expenses increased.

It was, therefore, even to his consciousness, just as well that his young wife died. It would perhaps have been better if the baby had died with her, and he could so have buried out of sight all reminder of that strange and incongruous episode in his life.

But the baby, a tiny girl, did not die. She struggled through teething, and whooping cough, and measles, and many other such attacks, in the midst of neglect, cold, heat, hunger, and pain, and lived on, growing into an almost preternaturally serious, wise, and thoughtful child.

There is a theory of which this father and child might be taken as striking examples. It is to the effect that every created soul has the same period of human life to compass, and that it exists, in successive

human incarnations, until that period is accomplished. Sometimes, but an hour or a minute may be needed to make up the exact sum, but the re-incarnation must necessarily be, even if for no longer a time than that. This theory, we are told, accounts for the phenomena of youth in age, and age in youth, which we so often see; in other words, it explains why a very aged person is often silly and childish, and a young child wise and matured in mind. When this occurs (so the theory goes) the old person is in his or her first incarnation — is, in fact, a young soul — while the child may be in his or her last incarnation, an old soul almost ready to be liberated from humanity and admitted to the higher life.

Whether there be truth in this theory, or not, certain it is that Clem Rhodes had the attributes of a young soul, ignorant in mind and shallow in feeling, while his little daughter (whom her fond mother had named Clementina) had the mental force

and depth of feeling which might well seem to belong to an old soul.

The strangest part of it was the way in which they both seemed to realize the truth about themselves. Although Clementina was now but six years old, and her father was well over fifty, there could be no question as to which of them was the guiding, ruling, dominating spirit. Her mind was as marked for its orderliness as her father's was for the absence of that trait. Quite from within, she had evolved a sentiment of horror for debt and loose dealing of every kind, and she would sit in judgment on her father for such practices in a way, which, however strange, he never thought of resenting. In some way never fully accounted for, she had formed the habit of calling him "Clem," or "Boy," instead of "Papa."

Clementina was by no means beautiful — a small, thin, pale child, with enormous dark eyes, which were so thoughtful and steady in their expression that most peo-

ple who looked at her, ever so casually, found their attention caught and fixed, and an impression of wonder conveyed to them.

The child's life was almost absolutely lonely, in spite of the fact that she had found out and entered herself as a pupil at a small free school in the neighborhood; for she kept apart from every one; and although she made extraordinary progress in her lessons, she made no friends. It was her father's habit to be absent all day, so she prepared her little mid-day meal, and partook of it alone.

By this time Rhodes's flagging energies and accumulating years had reduced him to such poverty, that his former rather comfortable set of rooms was now diminished to one, and in this he and the child slept, cooked, ate their meals, and lived. They had two folding-beds, which were closed up in the daytime, and a folding-table, which was then opened. At night, the beds were lowered into the central

space of the room, and the table folded back against the wall.

Rhodes always took his breakfast and late dinner with the child, these meals being cooked and served by her with very little help from him. She also did the marketing, and kept the accounts, setting down all her figures neatly and accurately, but getting his help in adding up the columns.

The father, of course, had a life of his own, which was as apart from that of the child, as her long, lonely hours were apart from his. He had dropped out of society, almost entirely, and he frequented the theatres more than ever. Occasionally, he took the child with him; but although she never so far relaxed her dignity as to fall asleep, she seemed to get but little pleasure out of it, and her solemn air and deeply thoughtful expression so grated on him, that he was glad that she did not oftener express a wish to go.

Clementina was a strangely wakeful

child, and he had never yet been able to steal into the room, no matter at what hour of the night, or with what degree of stealth, that she had not heard him.

"That you, Boy?" she would say, her voice sounding strangely conscious in the stillness and darkness. Then, invariably, she would sit up in her little bed, and strike a match and light the candle placed beside her. Then, when at her command he would come to kiss her good-night, she would give him that swift, searching look, which he always knew was coming, and then, if satisfied, she would lie down and go quietly to sleep.

As a general thing, it happened that she was satisfied, but there had been times when it was otherwise, and those occasions Rhodes remembered with such distinct unpleasantness, that they served him as valuable warnings. She had never uttered any rebuke in words, but the deep, penetrating condemnation of her concentrated gaze had made him feel, that for that

moment his life was turned inside out to her, and that she saw him as he was.

This was all the more painful to him, because of the fact that the child seemed to be possessed of an inherent respect for him. She advised, and even censured him at times, it is true, but always Rhodes had a sense of being deferred to, and it was a grateful feeling to the heart of such a poor devil as he.

Clementina never complained of solitude, and, as a rule, she seemed to prefer these lonely evenings, spent in studying her lessons, tidying things up, sewing on buttons, cleaning spots from her father's clothes, and doing odd jobs of mending, to the alternative of going to the theatre. Occasionally, however, she would announce that she was going with him, and at such times he never objected.

Rhodes had now been a widower for more than six years, and these years had been a tolerably fair copy of his bachelor days, except that he now made his life

among people of a somewhat lower grade than formerly; for they were almost exclusively third-rate actresses, dancers, concert-singers, etc. It was a life through which he would quickly have sunk very low, but for one thing — the influence of Clementina. She never preached goodness to him, nor talked religion (poor child, she had been taught little enough of either!), and yet she continually held him up to his better self, and dragged him back to it when he fell away.

About this time there appeared a celebrated dancer, whose services were engaged for the entire season at the Summer-Garden concerts, and poor old Clem, for the fortieth time, imagined that the *grande passion* of his life had come upon him.

Mademoiselle Tarara was not so far removed from first youth as he, but still she was by no means young. Her matured charms, however, were positively deadly to the troops of boys who attended these concerts, and she soon found herself

not only a financial, but a popular success. She was fond of boys, and her intercourse with them was far less harmful to them than it might have been. She had a great deal of rollicking fun in her, and she could always sing better and kick higher, when she was spurred on by the enthusiastic clapping and shouting of her young admirers. With the single exception of Rhodes, they were all many years her junior.

And if she was fond of the boys, she was also fond of Rhodes, for the very reason that he was a foil for them. Life was behind him, as it was behind her, and she often found his point of view congenial, after too much of the boyish element.

So Rhodes was admitted to the privilege of visiting her at her own rooms, which the boys were not, and his battered old heart was in the seventh heaven of delight.

The people whom he met at the Tarara's rooms were of a sort with herself, and all of them were so easy-going and inconsequent,

that it was a pleasant reaction from the rather constraining ideal held up to him by his child.

Poor old Clem ! He had been a dreamer all his life—of the earth, earthy, though his dreams had been — and shifting and unstable as they were in character. The favor which the Tarara showed him now had led him into dreams of a marriage with her, which would establish him for life in the green-room and lime-light atmosphere which he loved, and would give him, not only the Tarara herself, with whom he believed he was madly in love, but also all the other things which he desired in life. In the pursuance of these hopes, he had resolutely concealed from her the knowledge of the fact that he had a child, believing that it would be quite fatal to his cause.

In the evenings, when work was over, and the tiny room in perfect order, Clementina would sit alone and think. Of what did she think there in her little

chair, so neat and self-collected, with her eyes fixed on space, or else occasionally turned upward to the stars, of which she could see a small bright patch out of her little window? Her experience in this human existence had been so meagre, the avenues of knowledge so limited, that it would almost seem reasonable to suppose that she drew upon former experiences in some other incarnation, for the material of that deep thinking and wise doing, which continually occupied her.

One evening, it happened that Clem became conscious of an unusually penetrating and scrutinizing look fixed upon him by this austere child of his, and he imagined that it was in some occult way the result of that investigation, which caused her to announce, suddenly,

"I 'm going with you this evening, Clem."

"Where?" he said, surprised.

"Wherever you are going."

"I 'm going to the concert," he said; and

then added, dissuadingly, "You would n't like it."

"But I 'm going," she answered, putting away her dusting-cloth, after having made the room as neat as usual.

He felt a certain protest and anxiety, but he never resisted her, and so a little later they were taking their places in front of the lowered curtain. The prices at these concerts were very small, and there was always a good attendance, but the child and her father being early, had secured good seats.

In spite of himself, Clem was feeling rather uncomfortable this evening. He was not so free to indulge his admiration for the inimitable Tarara with this discordant element beside him — and what if his secret should be discovered? He had, moreover, the strongest feeling that Clementina's eyes invariably saw through the surface of things into their souls. He was afraid for her to see the Tarara, and still more afraid for the Tarara to see her,

though, of course, if this should happen, he need not own the relationship between them.

Clem now felt a shrinking from the thought of Clementina's comments on the Tarara, and he did n't like the idea of the dancer appearing before the child in her tinsel and tights. She always came out arrayed thus for at least one dance, though she generally changed her costume several times during the evening.

As Rhodes took a furtive look at the figure beside him, his sense of discomfiture increased.

She was startlingly pale, and so slim and delicate, that he was not surprised that the people about them looked at her with a certain pity, of which, it was evident, she took no account. Her odd garments and queer hat also marked her out for special notice; and when, taken in connection with all the rest, one noted the strange penetrating gaze of her immense dark eyes, it was not surprising, perhaps, that

Rhodes felt uncomfortable and half irritated at the position in which he found himself.

That fixed, absorbed look on the child's face did not change when the performance began. It was a merry chorus which made the audience laugh and beat time, but Clementina was unmoved. Then two men came out and danced a clog-dance, during which her look remained the same —as if, somehow, she saw through and beyond it all.

It was with a feeling of distinct apprehension that Rhodes now saw Mademoiselle Tarara make her appearance. She was dressed in an Italian peasant costume, but the skirts were shorter and the bodice lower than necessity required. He looked at the child to see if her countenance expressed any disapproval. To his great surprise, he saw that the little pale face had softened into a look of pleasure, as if she recognized something that she liked.

The Tarara, meanwhile, was posed, with

her hands on her hips, waiting for her cue from the orchestra.

As she stood thus, she looked around the house with an expression of friendly good-will on her face — the true index of a quality in her which accounted largely for her popularity. Then she began to sing.

It was a ballad of the "homely pathetic" order, such as never fails to go to the hearts of an audience, with its allusions to mother, wife, child, home, etc., and the Tarara sang it with great feeling.

Rhodes, watching that strange child of his, whom he always felt to be a mystery beyond his ken, saw now a look of deep content and pleasure settle on her face, and some very rare tear-drops rise to her eyes.

When the song had ended, she turned to him and said, abruptly:

"I love that lady."

A strange sense of joy throbbed through the man's heart at these words. They were something more than a surprise.

"She is good and kind," said Clemen-

tina, with the same tone of conviction. "I wish she would come back."

Rhodes, for his part, rather dreaded that return, for fear the sweet impression might be destroyed. But when she afterward appeared as a smart hussar, and sang a barrack song, and then as a *vivandière* and gurgled her song from over a tin canteen, the impression which she had made upon the child was evidently not disturbed.

It was noticeable, however, that the Tarara was the only one of the performers who had found favor with Clementina. The others either bored her, or roused a feeling of disapproval, which that strong little face well knew how to express.

The last appearance of the Tarara was in a ballet costume, and as she floated out on the stage and pirouetted up to the footlights, Rhodes glanced with real timidity at the child. He dreaded the effect of the bare limbs and painted face upon this austere judge. But Clementina's eyes were fixed with a look of unmixed pleas-

ure upon the dancer, who, as Clem now saw to his amazement, caught and returned her gaze.

It was for a second only, but there could be no doubt of it, and the child saw it, also, for she flushed with happiness and said, under her breath:

"Oh, the sweet lady!"

With the same look of confidence and content, she followed every movement until the dance was ended.

The Tarara, after that one glance, did not again look at the child, but as she skimmed and bounded about the stage, going through all the peculiarly imbecile motions of the modern ballet dance, as she toyed with her tarletan skirts and sidled diagonally on her poor blunted toes, threw her body backward and waved her arms, then smirked and grimaced at the applause that burst from the house, the child's gaze grew more and more delighted, until it deepened into a look of burning love.

This gaze, also, the dancer caught as she

was leaving the stage, and she not only caught, but returned it. Rhodes began to feel deeply alarmed for his secret, but the reflection, that she could not possibly know that the child was his, partly reassured him.

The Tarara vanished in a storm of applause. She had outdone herself to-night, and the audience sent up a vociferous encore.

"Oh, is she coming back? Is she coming back?" asked Clementina, breathlessly.

Her father, greatly wondering, assured her that the dancer would return.

But as the applause rose, subsided, then swelled again, and no Tarara appeared, he found that he had spoken too quickly. It became evident that the favorite refused to respond to the encore, and now, as four couples in the costumes of Bowery toughs swaggered out on the stage, the house grew quiet and turned its attention to the new performance.

But Clementina would not look at them. Instead, she turned to her father and said, in a voice of emphatic command:

"Take me to see that lady."

Rhodes was accustomed to obey the mandates of this imperious child, but for once he resisted her.

"I cannot," he said. "She is in her room. She is tired. People are not allowed to go to her private room."

"But I am going," said Clementina, in a tone in which, in all his experience, he had never known her to utter a fiat that was unfulfilled. As she spoke she rose from her place and took her father's hand, urging him insistently to go. Seeing that they were being observed by those about them, Rhodes yielded unwillingly, and when they were without in the vestibule of the theatre, she spoke again, in the same tone:

"I am going to see that lady," she said. "If you do not take me, I will go without you."

He was so accustomed to seeing her perform resolutely whatever she undertook—this strange, determined child of his—that he felt that he could not thwart her will, and so he began, in a helpless, entreating fashion, to try to alter it.

"Oh, Clementina, please do n't go!" he said. "Come home with me—please do! I 'll do anything you want if you 'll only come home with me now."

"Not until I have seen that lady," said the child, an expression of indomitable purpose making her little face look strangely old.

Poor Clem was almost in tears. He felt that he had not the power to resist her, and he felt, at the same time, that if she carried her point his case was lost with the Tarara. He had hoped to win her consent to marry him, and he had meant to conceal the child's existence until the marriage should be over, and then to confess it, throwing himself upon her mercy, and offering to put the child in

some school or asylum where she should be kindly treated and yet be out of the way.

But if Clementina persisted, now, all would be lost. He resolved upon a subterfuge and a lie. The child's purpose must be frustrated at all costs.

"If you will come with me now," he said, "I will take you to see her to-morrow. Come, Clementina, please."

"To-morrow will not do," the child began, in that same tone of resolution, but at this instant a boy came up to them, and delivered a message to Clem. This message was a summons to him to come at once to the Tarara's room, and to bring the child.

With a last effort at resistance he was beginning to frame an excuse, when, in the very midst of his speech, Clementina said, decisively, speaking to the boy:

"I am coming. Show me the way," and the poor old father was scarcely surprised when he found the messenger ig-

noring him entirely, and obeying the words of the child.

She had already started after him, and Clem could only follow them, in feeble wretchedness and disappointment.

The boy led the way through various dusty and dimly-lighted passages, and presently paused before a door at which he rapped sharply, and then walked away.

A voice said: "Come in!"

Clementina turned the knob, and entered, her father following, and taking care to close the door behind him.

Instead of finding the popular dancer flung in picturesque abandonment on the lounge, drinking iced champagne or smoking a cigarette (which was what Rhodes expected) he saw her seated before her dressing-table, on which were scattered a disorderly collection of wigs, masks, powder-puffs, curling-irons, rouge-pots, and various other paraphernalia of her profession. Her elbows were crushing some artificial flowers, as she sat with her chin in her hands

and her gaze fixed solemnly upon her own reflection in the mirror.

As she turned toward them, the child ran forward and flung her arms around the dancer's bare neck, lifting her face to be kissed.

The Tarara gave a little cry, and sprang to her feet, and then, the next instant, crouched down again, and made a motion as if she would cover, with her short tarletan skirts, the exposure of plump legs cased in thin flesh-colored tights. What had come over her? Those shapely limbs were usually her pride. When had she felt any sense of modesty about them before?

But the child was not looking at them. Neither did she look at the false hair, the rouge, the powder, the painted eyebrows, and *bistré* lids. She had clasped her arms around the dancer's neck again, and was looking straight into her eyes.

The feeling which came to the Tarara as she met that look was that one creature saw her soul, at last.

"I love you. You are kind, and sweet, and good," the child said, softly, still regarding her with that deep, penetrating gaze, and with intense conviction in her tone.

The Tarara's painted face began to quiver, and great tear-drops brimmed her eyes, as she caught the little creature to her, crushing to irremediable flatness her diaphanous tarletan skirts. She strained the small creature to her breast a moment, and then seated her on her lap. She had caught up a rich plush cape from a chair, and had thrown it over the tights and dancing-shoes.

Rhodes, meanwhile, stood looking on, in a state of stupefaction. They had both forgotten him, as they clung to each other, with close kisses and embraces.

A deep emotion was evident in both of them, but its character was different. The woman was stirred to a passionate excitement; her breaths came in deep, catching sobs; her face worked with a nervous strain; and her cheeks flushed hotly under

their rouge. The child, on the other hand, was deeply calm and grave. She lay with utter contentment in that bedizened creature's arms, and looked up at her as trustingly and unquestioningly as though she had been a Madonna. This long, deep, concentrated look was undisturbed, as she said with a wondering seriousness:

"Are you my mother?"

"No, darling, no," the dancer said, bending above her with a mother's tenderness, while the tears ran down her cheeks, making a pitiable daub of black and white and red there.

"My mother died," the child went on, looking only at the gentle eyes of the woman, and speaking in a grave and placid tone.

"And my little baby died," the dancer said. "She would have been as old as you. She died before she ever knew her mother's face, and my heart has been empty, ever since."

"I love you," said the child.

The strong, spasmodic movement with which the dancer crushed her to her heart, as she said these words, must have been physically painful, but if it was, the child gave no sign, except a radiant smile of joy. There was a look of almost holy calm upon the little pallid face. She put up one small hand, and patted lovingly the smeared face that bent above her.

"You are good," she said.

"Am I, darling? Oh, I should like to be! If my little baby had lived perhaps I should have been, though everybody has been bad to me. No one has ever loved me, as you do, before."

"Your little child loves you," was the quiet answer, still with that look and tone of knowledge.

"Oh, do you think she does, and that I will some time have her again?"

"Yes," said the child, with a certainty that seemed to make doubt unreasonable. Then looking around, as if in sudden

recollection, she said, "Clem — Boy — come here."

At these words a lingering hope sprang up in Rhodes's heart. This strange mode of addressing him might enable him to keep his secret still. If he could only get the child away now, and to-morrow contrive some way of accounting for her! With this end in view he came forward, the child turning on him, as he did so, the fond, penetrating look he knew so well.

The dancer glanced quickly from one to the other, but it was the child she questioned, and not the man.

"Is he your father?" she said.

"Yes," said Clementina. "My mother died when I was very little. He has been so good to me."

But what was the matter with Clementina's voice, and why was her breath suddenly so short and difficult? Rhodes was conscious of this, even in that moment when he realized that his secret was

revealed, and his hopes of the Tarara blasted. She was conscious of it, too, and her face took on a sudden look of terror.

Rhodes dropped upon his knees beside the two, who still clung to one another in that close embrace. Over the child's drooped head the man and the woman exchanged a quick, scared look. Then both looked at the child.

The gaze that answered their excited ones was so calm, so strong, so full of knowledge and assured content, that outwardly, at least, they were quieted. One thin, little arm lay still around the dancer's neck, and with evident effort she lifted the other and laid it around the neck of her frightened, childish old father.

Almost instantly it fell back heavily. There was a little twitch of the thin body, a stifled breath, one more sweet glance of love, and the child lay dead between them.

In a moment all was excitement and confusion. The alarm was given. People thronged the room. Doctors were summoned, but one look assured them that all was over with the child.

The Tarara, with trembling limbs and chattering teeth, threw on some clothes and drove home in the carriage with Rhodes, holding the dead child all the way close pressed against her heart.

Only once did the woman speak to him. It was when, between them, they had got the little body up to the tiny room, which had been its home in life, and had laid it upon one of the folding-beds, which had been so neatly made a few hours back. Then the Tarara, glancing around the poor place, so purely clean and orderly, taking in the details here and there — the child's slate and lesson books, and her little work-basket, with its half-used spools of thread and small brass thimble—and contrasting it with her own sumptuous rooms and luxur-

ious living, turned her gaze upon the man who stood helpless and miserable in the midst of this poverty-stricken home, and said:

"I would have married you for this child. You should have let me know."

Once More

Once More

In the days when the great West was still the wild West, many a strange scene took place before the eye of the gazer, who had the advantage of two points of view, and who could get the whole zest of these primitive conditions, by the process of contrasting them with a foregone civilization.

Such a one was the man, who had once been known in the fashionable circles of an eastern city as William Wilmerding, but who now, in the mining-camp, went by the more convenient name of Bill Will.

He had been a tender-foot when he first came to the camp, but it was not long before he hardened to the necessary state of roughness and toughness, to make him

acceptable to his companions and approved mining standards, and at last he became a prime favorite with the spirited and desperate fellows, who knew but the savage and seamy side of life, but who yet had something in them which responded to the charm of education and refinement, when properly repudiated and concealed.

For Bill, in his dress and in his daring deeds, was as tough and wild as any of them; indeed, there was a spirit of desperation in the man, which more than once had roused the admiration of the camp, in times of danger, and which had its source in a certain feeling in William Wilmerding's heart, which was his life secret—a secret which he had come to bury in this strange new existence. Nothing but despair of his heart's desire would have brought and kept him here.

Every camp in those days had its own pet pursuit, and in this one it was horse-racing. Their track was not as smooth as civilization would have made it, but for

that very reason better horses and better riders were required. Every spring and autumn they had a grand race-day, and the purses put up were so large, and the private betting was so reckless, that big sums of money were exchanged, and often the rich became poor, and the poor rich. These men had no families dependent upon them, and when once their blood was up, they did not hesitate to risk their last cent.

On the occasion of one of the spring races, the bustle and excitement were at their very height, and the most important race of the day was about to be run, when there drove into the field a wagon, in which were seated two such strange and alien-looking figures, that even the exciting demands of the present moment gave place, for a little while, to this new influence. The cart was driven by a hale and hearty old man, who looked impressively proud of his mission, and who was lifted so far above mining etiquette as to take off his hat to the assembled horse

racers, as he brought his cart to a standstill. It was probably, however, reverence for his passengers that led to this "break."

The passengers were two gray-clad, white-bonneted sisters of charity, who looked about them, on this alien scene, with mild-eyed wonder. One of them was stout, middle-aged, and homely, with energy and resolution written on every line of her face. The other was small, and young, and fair.

As the cart halted, the old man got up and announced that the sisters had come up from the mission, two hundred miles away, to ask for contributions toward the building of an orphanage, of which there was pressing need.

His speech was listened to with the politest attention by the crowd, a few men, here and there, being so far affected as to take off their hats in a shame-faced sort of way, and then confusedly to put them on again. The two sisters said nothing, but their mere presence there, looking

about them with placid kindly faces that carried a message of pure goodness to every heart, so impressed the camp that, for the moment, the zest about the coming race seemed in danger of eclipse.

This peril was perceived by one of the crowd, a tough and wiry little old man known as Jerry, who had great influence in the camp, and he now pushed his way to the front, and jumping on an upturned box, addressed the assemblage in lusty tones. Jerry was not altogether temperate in his habits, and his face and manner, to-day, indicated an ardor and excitement not wholly to be attributed to the coming great race. He was in the highest good humor, however, and his face fairly kindled, as he said:

"Time for the race, boys! Clear the track! Never you mind, old girl," to the elder of the sisters. "You 're all right. Pull off to one side there, driver, and let the sisters watch the race; and if Whirlwind wins it, we 'll give the old girl a

send-off that 'll make her heart jump out of her body."

The crowd answered with a cheer, and the current of interest was again turned toward the race track, down which Whirlwind, ridden by Bill Will, was now returning from a gentle preliminary canter. Bill Will had been at the other side of the course when the sisters had arrived, and now, as he rode up to the starting point, his eyes rested on these strange figures for the first time.

As they did so, he turned deadly white, and his body swayed in the light saddle, so that he almost lost his balance—a fact noticed, perhaps, by but one being in all that crowd, for, to the miners, a man amounted to little, beside a horse, on this day, and they were all gazing eagerly at Whirlwind to see if he looked in condition.

The person who saw only the man, and who had no consciousness of the horse, was the younger of the two sisters. Her face had turned as white as his, and now, while

the attention of all the rest was fixed upon the horse, her glance met that of the rider, with a gaze of mutual consciousness.

She saw him struggle to right himself, and to regain his self control, and she heard him say faintly that his throat was dry. A dozen flasks were hurriedly jerked from pockets, and held out to him.

"No," he said, "water!" and, at the sound of his voice, the little sister turned from white to burning red.

A man ran quickly and brought him some water in a tin cup. Before he took it, he removed his cap, and as he bent to drink, he looked again into the little sister's eyes, as if he pledged her thus, in silence.

Then, with a powerful rallying of his forces, he drew in Whirlwind's reins, and settled himself in his saddle, and with a low bow that might have graced a knight at a tournament, but which no one here noticed, or would have comprehended, he took his place with the other horses at the starting-point.

There was mad riding that day. The camp had hitherto seen nothing like it. The men from neighboring camps, who had entered fine horses upon which they had staked all their earthly possessions, had gone in to win, and were resolved that Whirlwind should not have this race, if grit in man and beast could prevent it. Every horse was strained to its extremest powers, and every rider rode with a conscious risk of neck and limb, but if the others did the utmost possible, it seemed as though Whirlwind and his rider did the impossible.

Every eye was so strained upon that break-neck rush around the course, that a spectator was very sure of escaping observation; so no one saw the little sister's face. Even the motherly old creature at her side was peering eagerly through her steel-rimmed spectacles, not in any absorption in the race, but in dire anxiety for the life and limbs of those reckless men.

One man, in truth, was thrown and

stunned, one noble horse out-strained himself and broke a blood-vessel, but Whirlwind's rider, who had been the boldest there, came in unscathed, and Whirlwind won the race.

And then began a whooping and cheering that made the place a pandemonium, which even the unwonted feminine presence in their midst could not keep in abeyance. Gold and silver, flowing like water, passed from hand to hand, making some rich, and others poor; for in the camp such indebtednesses were settled on the instant, and no man shirked.

When accounts were apparently squared, Jerry, wild with enthusiasm, sprang up in front of the cart in which the sisters sat, and shouted lustily:

"Our horse has won the race! Hurrah for Whirlwind and Bill Will!"

When the cheer had been repeated to the echo, Jerry, taking fresh breath, went on:

"And hurrah for the sisters and the

orphans, too, I say! March up here, every mother's son of you, and ante up half your winnin's for the orphans! Here you are, old girl," he said, throwing a big handful of gold into her lap. "That 's half of my pile, and if ever you tackle an orphan o' mine, teach it to bet its last dollar on the winnin' horse! Come ahead, boys! Every last one o' you throw in half your pile, and the devil take the one that refuses!"

For the next five minutes, the gold and silver coins fell like pouring hailstones into the old sister's ample lap, and while this was going on, Bill Will, with quiet, stealthy footsteps, approached the cart from the other side, and poured his contribution into the lap of the younger sister. Those who noticed it were not aware that it was not the half, but the whole of his winnings, of which he so disposed. Nor did they notice that, among the coins, was a little woodland flower, which he had stooped and gathered.

This small and worthless offering was not wholly overlooked, however, for before she turned over her rich tribute of gold to her companion, the little sister took the flower and hid it in the folds of her gray gown—an action that was clearly seen by one.

Presently the old man stirred up his drowsy horse, and the cart began to move. He had thanked the crowd for their generous charity, in the name of the sisters, whose order did not permit them such public speech.

The men stood watching the departure of the cart with a certain wistfulness. The sight of these good women had roused them to unwonted musings. But of the tragedy taking place beneath their eyes, they had no imagination—for in that moment, a man and a woman who had loved with the supreme passion of their hearts, and who had been separated by an inexorable fate, had looked their last into each other's eyes.

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